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SOLVING LIFE'S EVERYDAY PROBLEMS

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SOLVING LIFE'S EVERYDAY PROBLEMS

BY

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TO

CHARLES WHITNEY GILKEY

LOVED AND TRUSTED BY MANY PEOPLE
HIS OWN BROTHER
AMONG THEM

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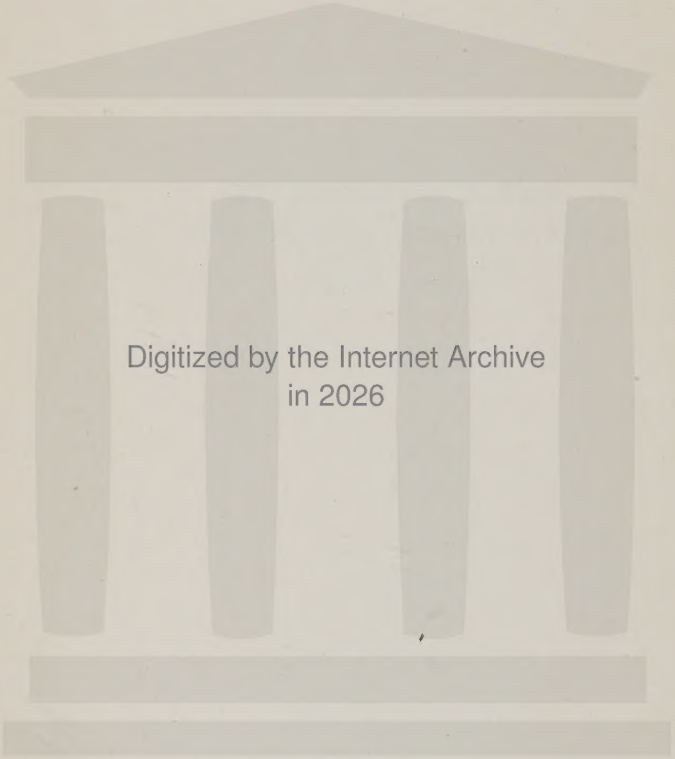
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FOREWORD

THREE years ago I published a volume [1] discussing eight of the practical problems of daily life and suggesting ways by which ordinary people could solve them. So many readers seem to have found help in those chapters that I have now ventured to prepare a somewhat longer volume of the same type. The twelve problems here discussed are familiar to us all, and in the case of many people the task of discovering how to live a happier and more effective life involves the task of solving one or more of them. The suggestions here offered for their solution have grown out of many contacts in a city parish and a near-by college, out of the advice given by other speakers and writers, and out of my own personal experience. If any readers are interested to inquire whether God helps us as we try to solve these problems they will find my answer to that question in another volume.[2]

J. G. G.

April, 1930
Springfield, Massachusetts.

[1] J. G. Gilkey, *Secrets of Effective Living.*
[2] J. G. Gilkey, *The Certainty of God.*

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CHAPTER I

GETTING A PERSPECTIVE ON SUCCESS

I

Some time ago a new correspondence school was opened in the middle west. It adopted the alluring title, "The Institute of Business Success," and promised everyone who enrolled valuable instruction in the art of succeeding. Here is one of the exercises sent out by the Institute for the use of its students. "Pin the enclosed card on your wall so that the word Success will be on an exact level with your eyes. Stand directly in front of the card and place the palm of your right hand lightly against the back of your head. Then bring the hand quickly over the top of the head, continuing this movement until the arm is outstretched with the index finger pointing directly at the word Success. Each time this movement is completed repeat firmly 'Success is mine!' Continue this exercise for five minutes. N. B. Never allow yourself to fall asleep while practising."

You and I laugh at that nonsense. We wonder why anyone would pay good money for such instruction. But the man who devised that lesson understood clearly the dominant desire of numberless people to-day. Above everything else they want to succeed. What do they mean by success? In most cases they mean winning money and the things money will buy, gaining business or professional advancement, and attaining social recognition. In all frankness, are not these things the ultimate ambitions of many—perhaps most—of the people you know?

Sometimes the efforts made to win this success are immensely impressive. We find no such easy method as standing before a card on the wall and shouting "Success is mine!" Rather we discover a struggle, a self-sacrifice and a grim endurance that almost pass belief. Consider this paragraph from a recent account of the life of Richard Mansfield, the eminent actor of the last generation., "At Mr. Mansfield's first appearance on a London stage it was seen at once that he was excessively nervous. When later in the play he was supposed to sit down at a piano and strike a few chords he fainted dead away. After the performance the stage manager discharged him with

the angry comment, 'You are the most nervous man I ever saw!' But the young actor had not fainted from nervousness. He had fainted from hunger. For three days he had not had a bite to eat. In speaking later of those early struggles in London Mr. Mansfield said, 'When night came I used to walk the streets. If I was lucky enough to have a penny in my pocket I would go to a stand on a street corner and buy a hot baked potato. Then I would put the potato in my pocket to warm my frozen fingers, and when the potato was as cold as I was, eat it for my supper.' " Scores of the men and women of our day are making sacrifices equally great to reach the goal they have set for themselves. Such is the price human beings will pay for success.

But do all the people who pay the price win the success? There is one of the tragedies of life. Richard Mansfield endured hardship for years, and then became one of the undisputed leaders of his profession. But there were hundreds of other actors who made sacrifices equally great only to end their career playing small parts in the provinces. That boy of to-day who is pointing at the card pinned on his wall and muttering grimly "Success is mine!" may eventually win the fortune on which he has set his

heart. But what shall we say about the hundreds of other boys who also buy cards, also practice auto-suggestion, and then remain underpaid clerks for the rest of their days? The unhappy fact is that though everyone wants success and though most people work hard to win it, only a few people actually get it. The great majority of men and women must adjust themselves, willingly or unwillingly, to a life of ordinary attainment. Furthermore, even the individuals who achieve eminence soon discover that they cannot hold it indefinitely. A day comes, and usually comes all too soon, when they must watch some rival take their place as the richest man, the cleverest doctor, the most successful business executive in the community. Vachel Lindsay has recently published a little verse about success and failure in modern New York which suggests this truth vividly.

There's a new king in Babylon
Every hour.
There's a new queen in Babylon
Every year.
And the kings go down
And the queens go down
With a heartbreak
And a terrible cry of fear!

In such a world how can a man gain serenity of spirit? How can he learn to live above success and above failure, so that no matter which of the two comes to him he will retain his inward quietness and his happiness in living? A few individuals seem to have solved this problem and discovered this secret. They make, of course, every effort to succeed. All through life they keep hoping that success will come to them, and they try persistently to be worthy of it. But if their ventures fail, or if an initial success turns to failure, they still retain their poise, their self-confidence, and their joy in life. Such individuals have, obviously, a perspective on success and failure which the ordinary person lacks. What is that perspective? How can you and I get it?

II

There are several facts about success and failure which centuries of experience have finally made plain. When we recognize these facts and remind ourselves frequently of them we gradually acquire the perspective on our own achievement which all of us so greatly need. The first fact is that many people manufacture a wholly false sense of failure. They persuade themselves that they have made a

sorry record, while the truth is they have done remarkably well.

Perhaps the commonest way of creating a false sense of failure is to compare ourselves with the wrong people. Here, for example, is a young man who on graduating from college became a teacher in a public school. One day he starts to compare himself with a classmate who on leaving college went into stock speculation and speedily accumulated a fortune. What a contrast between the teacher's meager salary and the speculator's immense income! What a difference between their homes, their prospects for the future, and the advantages they give their children! As the teacher begins to draw these unhappy comparisons he generates within his own mind the conviction that he has been a total failure. But nothing of the kind is true. That teacher is, as numberless people could testify, one of the outstanding successes in his profession. The source of his unhappiness and his sense of failure lies in the fact that he has compared himself with the wrong person, with a man whose career is entirely different from his own. One man is engaged in public service, the other is busy making (or losing) a private fortune. One man takes part of his remuneration in intangible

things—in friendships, in the chance to touch the life of children, in the opportunity to exert an influence on the future. The other man takes his rewards almost exclusively in cash. The two careers are entirely different, and it is as futile to compare them as it is to try to estimate the relative merits of a Beethoven symphony and a beefsteak dinner. If you want to estimate accurately your own achievement you must compare yourself with people of your own age, your own advantages, your own type of work, your own native gifts, and your own actual opportunities. Then and only then can you determine whether—everything considered—you are a success or a failure. When a man stands in front of a pebble he seems enormous. When he stands in front of a mountain he seems insignificant. If he wants to gauge his true size he must stand beside a representative of his own species.

Another common way of creating a false sense of failure is to take records and statistics too seriously. Ours is the first generation that has learned to make charts and graphs, and the probability is that most of us have played too long and too solemnly with these new toys. We all realize, of course, that there are some facts and some situations which can be

clearly and accurately pictured by curved lines, or by a maze of colored dots on a sheet of white cardboard. But there are other realities which such devices can never record. Here, for instance, is a young doctor who has been counting up the number of calls he made last year and comparing it with the number of calls he has made this year. To his consternation he finds that he made far more visits a year ago than he is making now. The lines on his chart make that fact all too plain. Does this mean he is losing his place among the physicians of the community? Does it indicate that within five years he will be listed among the second-raters? The chart may mean that, and it may mean nothing of the kind. Perhaps the true explanation of the situation lies in a group of factors which the chart is powerless to reveal. Perhaps the decline in the number of the doctor's visits may be due to the fact that the general health of the community is better this year than it was last, or the fact that a new doctor has moved into the neighborhood, or the fact that faith-healing has had a sudden vogue, or the fact that the doctor's own prescriptions are so effective that his patients are steadily kept in the best of health! It is a difficult task to collect figures and draw diagrams. It is even more difficult

to make the diagrams tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

When we turn from the work of the day to the question of the influence that work will exert on the future, the inherent limitations of graphs and statistics become even more evident. What set of figures can suggest the contribution a poem, a picture, or a fine play makes to the inner life of successive generations? What collection of red pins and blue dots can picture accurately the relative influence of a great teacher and a dishonest mayor? Some months ago two heavyweight boxers pummelled each other with due consideration for twenty minutes, and then divided nearly two million dollars as a reward for the evening's efforts. Many years ago a young artist named Rembrandt spent weeks perfecting a picture called "The Night Watch" for which he received only three thousand dollars. Look at the comparative financial ratings—two million dollars for a prize fight, and three thousand dollars for a picture that will inspire the generations. Do figures and bank balances tell the whole story after all?

III

A second fact we should bear in mind as we dis-

cuss success and failure is this. The outcome of every human venture is determined by the interplay of many factors, only a few of which are under our control. We may do our best in a given situation and emphatically deserve success. But the uncontrollable factors in that situation may conspire against us and eventually bring about a stinging defeat. Conversely, we may find success literally given to us, pushed into our hands by forces which we did not set in motion and the operations of which actually eluded our attention.

Some years ago a Boston minister spent the summer cruising off the coast of Newfoundland. One day he visited an unfrequented harbor on the Straits of Belle Isle, and there found a fisherman in the depths of poverty. This fisherman tried to sell the minister many things, among them a pork barrel filled with a soapy substance which had been taken from inside a dead whale. He offered the barrel and its contents for twenty-five dollars, and then suggested he would accept a bargain price of only fifteen dollars. But the minister explained he was not interested. As a matter of fact neither man had the slightest idea what the substance in the barrel was. But when, some days later, the minister returned to

civilization carrying with him a fragment of that material, he learned to his astonishment that it was pure ambergris and worth nearly one thousand dollars a pound. There was a fortune of a quarter of a million dollars waiting in that pork barrel in the fisherman's shack! At once the minister started back for that lonely harbor, hoping to reach it before the winter storms began, and planning to tell the fisherman of his good luck. But the winds were contrary and the season late, and it was the following summer before the minister sailed into that harbor again. He went at once to the fisherman and asked where the pork barrel was. The fisherman seemed puzzled, and it was several minutes before he recalled the events of the preceding summer. Then he explained that the soapy substance in the barrel had gradually developed a strong odor to which his wife had objected so vigorously that for her Christmas present he had dumped the barrel and its contents into the sea. What was responsible for that loss of a fortune? Certainly nothing for which the fisherman could be blamed. In the final analysis it was the direction of the wind the preceding summer which was responsible. Had it not blown persistently in the wrong direction the minister would have succeeded in reach-

ing the harbor and telling the fisherman that he was a rich man. Or, taking a masculine point of view, we might say that the fisherman's wife was to blame. Had she not made such a fuss at Christmas the ambergris would still have been in the barrel!

Such incidents—and they could be multiplied almost indefinitely—reveal one of the highly significant truths about success and failure. Success and failure are not necessarily a true index of a man's ability or his deserts. Numberless people, gifted and hard-working, have been cheated out of fame and fortune by some such twist of circumstance as the one that kept the Newfoundland fisherman in dismal poverty. Meantime other people, no more able and certainly no more deserving, have been caught up and lifted into positions of comfort and eminence by forces which they neither created nor foresaw. Years ago Rudyard Kipling put into a poem this memorable couplet:

> If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
> And treat those two impostors just the same . . .

Kipling calls them impostors. To a certain extent he is right. The people who fail ought to remember

this. The people who succeed might do well to recall it too.

IV

Another fact we should bear in mind as we struggle for attainment is this. The people who miss fame and fortune can still be happy, radiantly happy. They can do so for the simple reason that the major sources of happiness lie open to everyone, even to the people whom the world counts failures. The most obvious of these sources of happiness is human companionship and human love, particularly the companionship and love of one's home. How many parents, perplexed by disappointment and continuing poverty, have found life sweet because of their love for each other and their children's love for them! How many other people, laden with wealth and fame but living in utter loneliness, would exchange their tinsel treasures for the true riches they see in the homes of their neighbors! In one of John Fiske's letters to his wife he reports a conversation which he had with Herbert Spencer, the great English philosopher. Mr. Fiske was visiting Mr. Spencer in England, and Mr. Spencer made the natural inquiries about Mrs. Fiske and the children in America. That night Mr. Fiske sent his wife this account of the ensuing incident.

"I showed Spencer the little picture of our picnic-wagon with the children inside. When I realized how lonely he must be without any wife and babies of his own, and how solitary he is in all his greatness, I had to pity him. Then as I watched him studying that picture and gazing at our children's faces I said to myself, 'That wagon-load of youngsters is worth more than all the philosophy ever concocted, from Aristotle to Spencer inclusive!' "[1] You count yourself a failure? Ask yourself if you have not had—after all—some of the most durable satisfactions of life, some of the deepest joys known to human hearts.

Another major source of happiness for innumerable people—successful or unsuccessful—is their daily work. Long ago they learned to do it well, and now the mere act of doing it creates within them a never-ending sense of satisfaction. We sometimes wonder why men in middle life who have accumulated a competence still keep working. We wonder why musicians who have abandoned their public career continue to practice, why amateur poets continue to write verses, and why men with a mechanical bent deliberately spend their occasional holidays

[1] John Spencer Clark, *John Fiske*, Vol. I, p. 475.

tinkering with machines. The reason is the same in all cases, and is familiar to anyone who knows human nature. Some of our keenest satisfactions and deepest joys grow out of the act of doing the thing we have learned to do, and now do well. Whether we achieve fame and fortune in the process makes no difference. Happiness is ours, irrespective of external recognitions and rewards. In his *Spoon River Anthology* Edgar Lee Masters tells the story of a country violinist who in spite of the fact that he never accumulated money or land still lived a radiantly happy life. By doing the thing he could do and loved to do he kept abiding joy in his heart.

> The earth keeps some vibration going
> There in your heart, and that is you.
> How could I till my forty acres,
> Not to speak of getting more,
> With a medley of horns, bassoons, and piccolos
> Stirred in my brain by crows and robins
> And the creak of a windmill?
> I never started to plow
> That someone did not stop in the road
> And take me away to a dance or a picnic.
> I ended up with my forty acres,
> A broken fiddle, a thousand memories,
> And not a single regret.[3]

[3] Edgar Lee Masters, *Fiddler Jones.*

V

What we have said so far has no connection with religious beliefs. It applies with equal directness to those who count themselves Christians, and to those who do not. There are two additional convictions about success and failure which those of us who follow Jesus' teachings hold. To begin with, we believe with Jesus that a man's true attainment is never measured by what he has. Rather it is measured by what he is. This is one of the basic beliefs about life held by Christians. It explains why through all the centuries true followers of Jesus have been vastly more concerned with building a character than with accumulating a fortune. How clearly this emphasis on inner rather than outer wealth appears in the sayings of Jesus! Repeatedly He warned His followers against covetousness, insisting that a man's true life does not grow out of the number of material things in his possession. He told the story of a property-owner whose one aim was to pile up more wealth, accumulate additional grain and buildings. Jesus said that in God's estimation this man was a fool. Why? Because his eyes were fixed on the less important side of life. Repeatedly Jesus

urged the people about Him to stop thinking so constantly about material treasure to be laid up in this world, and to think more about spiritual treasure—nobility of soul—which could be carried over into the world to come. Granted that our modern civilization is different from the one Jesus knew. Granted that the application of Jesus' ideas in the modern world is a task beset with bewildering difficulties. We Christians are still convinced that Jesus' scale of values was fundamentally sound, and that modern America—dominated by a passion for material success and beset by a fear of material failure—bitterly needs the corrective emphasis which Jesus' teaching brings. If all of us count money and fame the greatest things in life and then set our hearts on winning them at any cost, most of us are headed for disappointment and heartache, and the civilization we are building is headed for disaster. Everyone cannot win great wealth or wide attention, no matter how persistently we tinker with the machinery of life. Most of us must fill ordinary positions and accept ordinary remunerations. Only when we realize with Jesus that the building of a noble character is vastly more important than the acquisition of money and fame, that what a man is counts far more than what

a man has, can we find with Jesus that inner peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

The other conviction which we as Christians hold is this. We believe with Jesus that God's love, God's care, and God's purpose surround each human life. As soon as a man begins to live at his best—meeting life's situations with his keenest intelligence, his bravest courage, his most generous kindness—he opens his life to the divine love and care, and aligns himself with the divine purpose. It makes no difference who the man is, what religious beliefs he holds or does not hold, or what his previous moral record has been. The moment he begins living at his best, his life and God's life begin to merge, and like a rivulet joining a river flow onward together. When this happens God leads that man to the place He wants him to fill, the work He wants him to do, and the people He wants him to help. There are of course other forces far less wise and far less kind at work in our strange universe. The stern processes of Nature march on their relentless way. The creative power of other human beings makes it possible for them to initiate developments that affect disastrously

the course of many lives. The curious factor of coincidence must always be reckoned with. Yet in, around, and beyond these other forces are the love, the care, and the purpose of God. The divine power is forever at work, sometimes accelerating and sometimes resisting the developments already initiated in human lives. Like the tide, the divine purpose sometimes moves with us and sometimes against us, but silent and unobserved it is always flowing below the surface of life.

What does this mean for our estimates of success and failure? It means this. When we find our plans blocked and our hopes frustrated we Christians ask if—perhaps—God is in the experience. What if He is holding us away from one career in order to bring us later to a better one? When we find ourselves compelled to stay in some small corner, apparently failing there as Jesus seemed to fail in Galilee, we ask again if—perhaps—God is in that experience. What if He is using us in a small place as He once used Jesus in a small place, to set loose in the hearts of others forces for good that will never die? The silent and the unseen tides of God—how the sting goes out of failure when we begin to think of them!

We cannot look beyond
The spectrum's mystic bar,
Beyond the violet light
Yea, other lights there are,
And waves that touch us not,
Voyaging far.

Vast, ordered forces whirl
Invisible, unfelt,
Their language less than sound
Their names unspelt.
Suns cannot brighten them
Nor white heat melt.

Here in the clammy dark
We dig as dwarfs for coal,
Yet One Mind fashioned it
And us, a luminous whole:
As lastly thou shalt see,
Thou, O my soul! [8]

[8] Grace Wilkinson, *Beyond the Spectrum.*

CHAPTER II

FINDING HAPPINESS IN AN ORDINARY CAREER

I

How many people have an ordinary career? Perhaps these figures, recently published by Sherwood Eddy, will answer the question. "In the United States to-day there are some 25,000,000 families. Of these about 7500 enjoy an annual income of $100,000 or more. What of the other American homes? More than half the families in this country report an income (for the head of the family) of less than $1500 per year. Here, and further down the economic scale, we find to-day some 10,000,000 individuals who are in actual poverty. Under normal circumstances there are, on any working day in the year, some 6,000,000 people unemployed." [1]

These startling statements are substantiated by bits of evidence gathered from many sources. One of the officials of the Treasury Department stated

[1] George Sherwood Eddy, *New Challenges to Faith*, p. 201.

that, for the income year 1925, 29/100 of 1 per cent of the population paid over 95 per cent of the income tax collected from individuals, 17 per cent paid slightly less than 5 per cent of the total tax, and the remaining 82 per cent of the population paid no tax, so small was their income.[2] Early in 1929 Secretary Davis of the Department of Labor wrote a letter to a newspaper in Wales protesting against the common idea that all Americans are well-to-do, and stating that 80 per cent of our people must still be classed as poor. Shortly before that time the Federal Trade Commission made a detailed analysis of the estates left by deceased persons living in fifteen different states scattered throughout the country. It was discovered that 76½ per cent of these people had left no estate whatever. In commenting on these facts the *Springfield Republican* adds, "The truth about the United States is that 90 per cent of the accumulated national wealth is owned by 13 per cent of the population, and that 76½ per cent of our people do not own a bit of it." [3] The more we study figures like these, and the more we consider the human situations they represent, the more clearly we

[2] George Sherwood Eddy, *Religion and Social Justice,* p. 15.

[3] Editorial in the *Springfield* (Massachusetts) *Republican,* February 2, 1929.

discern this fact. Most of the people about us have a distinctly commonplace career. They work at an ordinary job, live in an ordinary home, win an ordinary success, and receive ordinary pay.

On learning truths like these our first reaction is to plead vigorously for a fairer division of the good things of life. Thousands of socially minded leaders of our generation are making that plea, and are working with ever-increasing intelligence and vigor to wipe out these startling inequalities of wealth, opportunity and happiness. We can never be too grateful for this new social conscience, this widening realization that something is radically wrong with our present social order when a few individuals can enjoy so much while the vast majority must get along with so little. We can never be too thankful for the effort now being made to bring about a more equal distribution of material wealth, or too ready to do our part in the reconstruction of American society which such a change contemplates.

Yet when all is said, everyone cannot be given an extraordinary position or extraordinary advantages. No matter how many changes are made in our social and economic order the overwhelming majority of our people will continue to face an ordinary life and

follow an ordinary career. We cannot make everyone a millionaire, or give everyone even moderate wealth. We cannot eliminate all the subordinate positions, or promote everyone in every business concern to the position of general manager. We certainly cannot move everyone out of a dull neighborhood and establish everyone in the most attractive residential section of our most attractive city. In the final analysis most of us, and most of the Americans of the future, must face prospects—in work, in achievement, and in remuneration—that are frankly commonplace. We might wish that a way could be found to divide more evenly the fame and fortune lavished on the man who makes the first flight from New York to Paris, or the explorer who catches the first glimpse of the North Pole. But it is safe to say that for every hero riding at the head of a long procession there will always be thousands of relatively unknown individuals who, after the hero has passed, must hurry back to, a job, a home, and a personal future that prove at best uninspiring. Karle Wilson Baker has suggested the situation of the average person in a verse of almost photographic vividness. She calls it "From a Pullman Car Window."

All day I have been gazing out of the window
Blessing my eyes with the silver of the little bare trees.
But now in the dark
I am haunted by the faces of the women in lonely houses.
Here an old one
There a young one,
But always a woman in a half-opened door
Watching the world go by.

II

Can a man find happiness in an ordinary career? Many people doubt it. They set their heart on winning great wealth, achieving nation-wide fame, fighting their way forward to business or professional preëminence. They are convinced that if they reach these goals happiness will be theirs. Conversely if they miss this success nothing can save them from misery. These ideas, obviously present in the minds of many young people, persist secretly in the minds of many individuals who long ago left youth behind. These mature men and women, disappointed in their meager attainments and chagrined by their unexpected and perhaps undeserved disasters, are convinced that in missing the great success of which they once dreamed they have missed their chance at a happy life. The best thing now is, they tell them-

selves, to make the best of an admittedly bad situation.

But how sharply the experience of the generations contradicts this wide-spread notion! Centuries ago a man who was so poor that He did not have a place in which to lay His head told His friends that a man's life does not grow out of the multitude of things in his possession. Rather a man's life grows out of ideas, ideals, achievements in wisdom and character, and the friendships with men and with God that transfigure an ordinary career. In the centuries since, numberless people have found Jesus' words profoundly true. Listen to Dr. Grenfell. "If I were annihilated to-morrow I would know that I had already found the supreme joys of human life. I have had books and games and animals, the sea and travel and friendship. To these have been added the supreme joys which a wife and a child can bring. I have also had many opportunities to help other people over hard places. This last joy, the joy of kindness, is in a way the greatest in life, for it is always within the reach of every human being." You have been in despair about yourself and your future? You have concluded that your disappointments and

failures make a happy life impossible? Take courage again! Even if your career is an ordinary one you can be happy. The deepest joys known to human hearts come from intangible things—from ideas and ideals, from love and friendship, from kindness and work well done. These joys are within your reach and they will always be within your reach, even though you live in a dreary neighborhood, work at a dull job, and get along as best you can on a small income.

When I am tired of earnest men
  Intense and keen and sharp and clever,
Pursuing fame with brush or pen
  Or counting metal disks forever,
Then from the halls of shadowland
  Across the trackless, purple sea
Old Martin's ghost comes back to stand
  Beside my desk and talk to me.

Some people ask: What cruel chance
  Made Martin's life so sad a story?
Martin? Why, he exhaled romance
  And wore an overcoat of glory!
A fleck of sunlight in the street,
  A horse, a book, a girl who smiled,
Such visions made each moment sweet
  For this receptive, ancient child.

Because it was old Martin's lot
To be, not make, a decoration
Shall we then scorn him, having not
His genius of appreciation?
Rich joy and love he got and gave,
His heart was merry as his dress,
Pile laurel wreaths upon his grave,
His did not gain, he was, success.[4]

III

Suppose, now, as you think of your own future you realize that your career will in all likelihood be an ordinary one. What can you do to increase your own inner happiness?

For one thing, you can remind yourself that there is a certain amount of dullness in every life. This is a fact which discouraged people usually forget. They watch their friends and foolishly imagine that for them existence is always interesting and work always stimulating. They watch the few well-known people in their community and tell themselves that for these fortunate individuals there is no such thing as drudgery or disappointment. How superficial these judgments are! The slightest acquaintance with the individuals whom we envy discloses the fact that

[4] Joyce Kilmer, *Old Martin.*

their life, like ours, has dull spots in it. You think that men in positions of intellectual leadership always find life interesting? President Eliot of Harvard once confessed, "My work offers me, I imagine, more variety than the work of most professional men offers them. Yet at least nine-tenths of my work has now come to be mere routine. It brings me no more novelty or fresh interest than the work of a carpenter or a blacksmith brings him." You think that the men who possess genius are relieved from drudgery and self-discipline? At the height of his career one of the great pianists of the last century wrote, "I must practice from six to eight hours every day. If I dropped my practicing for one day I should see the difference in my playing. If I dropped it for two days my friends would see the difference. If I dropped it for three days even my audiences would detect a change." You think that the few men who occupy positions of great power are sustained by the magnitude of their tasks and their responsibilities, and never feel fatigue or depression? During his arduous years in the White House President Wilson used to attend the theater frequently on Saturday nights. One evening the audience gave him more than the usual salvo of applause and several individ-

uals began to call insistently for a speech. Finally Mr. Wilson rose wearily and said, "My friends, you are not looking at the President of the United States. You see only a very tired man who is trying to forget his problems. He has no speech to make." You and I would not escape dullness and difficulty if we changed places with someone else. We would merely substitute new drudgeries and hardships for old. The first step toward happiness is to recognize this fact, accept one's own life, and then quietly resolve to find joy and satisfaction in it.

IV

A second fact all of us might well recall is this. Any man can increase his own inner happiness by beginning to think of his career in high terms rather than low ones. Some years ago a young college graduate was forced, much against his will, to succeed his father as the head of the family business—a milk-distributing concern. This young man had always pictured himself in a more impressive career, and it was a distinct blow to his pride to find himself only the community milkman. Worse still, he soon discovered that there were many unforeseen difficulties in the new career. He had to placate a

throng of suspicious and resentful farmers, each of whom was convinced that the profits of the enterprise were not fairly divided. He had to haggle with dozens of teamsters and truck-drivers, each of whom had his own pet grievance against the company. Then there were the ten thousand customers served by the concern, each ready to register a prompt and vigorous complaint if the morning's milk was not delivered on time. One day this young man, discouraged and bewildered, began to pour out his woes to a friend. The friend listened for a time and then broke in sharply. "What's the matter with you, anyway? Do you think you are the only person in the United States with a hard job to handle? If some of the rest of us began telling you our troubles we would make you look like a fretty child. I should advise you to forget this notion that you are only a much-abused milkman. Why don't you think of yourself as a public servant charged with one of the most important jobs in the community—the job of giving children cleaner and richer milk than they ever had in the past?" There was an entirely new idea, and gradually it transformed that young man's attitude toward his work. He began to picture his career in high terms rather than low ones, think of

himself as a trusted public servant rather than an overworked money-maker. He interested himself in the problem of child nutrition, and began to coöperate with the different health organizations of the city and the near-by rural sections. Finally the career that had seemed unendurable revealed itself as one filled with satisfaction and promise. The young man's personal problem had been solved by a change in his attitude toward the work he found himself compelled to do.

Scores of discouraged people could speedily alter their outlook on life and transform their own inner feeling if they would follow his example. Here, for instance, is a school teacher, bewildered and exhausted at the end of a term's work. What a difference it would make in her happiness if she would stop thinking of herself as an overworked woman trying to earn a small salary in a nerve-wracking job, and begin to think of herself as a leader commissioned by the community to train the new generation for wiser and nobler citizenship! Here is an insurance salesman, discouraged by a month of pitifully small sales. What a difference it would make in his happiness if he would stop thinking of himself as a drudge trying to dispose of insurance policies,

and begin to think of himself as a man whose life-work is to help other people protect themselves against the great hazards of existence! Here is a manufacturer, struggling to keep his factory running during a long period of business depression. What a difference it would make in his happiness if he would stop thinking of himself as a mere money-grabber, and begin to think of himself as a man commissioned to produce an article which the community must have, and given the chance to devise ways of producing it at a cost lower than the one known heretofore! The fact is there are two ways of looking at each of the numberless careers known to men. One is the cynical way, the other the appreciative way. If we choose the first it is not surprising that our courage fades and our capacity for achievement wanes. If we choose the second, we can speedily bring the radiance back into the day's work.

V

Here is another significant fact. A man who discovers himself in an ordinary career can—if he will—always find ways to enlarge his world and widen his opportunities. In every city there are scores of people who, once restricted by sickness, poverty, old age,

or a tragic personal situation, have finally succeeded in escaping from their prison and gaining entrance to a bigger and more inspiring world. Some years ago a French-Canadian immigrant, a woman sixty-eight years old, appeared at one of the evening schools in Springfield. To the teacher's surprise she said she wanted to learn to read and write. She went on to explain that she had given each of her children the chance to get schooling, and that as long as they lived with her they had read the newspaper to her every night. But now the last of the children had left home, and the mother was quite alone. Did the teacher think she could learn to read the newspaper herself? Was there any chance that she could some day write her own name as her children had learned to write theirs? So the schooling began, when the pupil was sixty-eight. The woman's hands were so twisted by rheumatism and factory work that she could not hold a pencil. With rare thoughtfulness the teacher suggested that she make her letters with a large block of chalk on the blackboard "where everyone in the class could see how fine they were." The teacher printed the woman's name in capitals, and then with pitiful eagerness the woman did her best to copy it. Three months of persistent effort, and

then the woman could print words so plainly that her grandchildren could read them. In her second year of schooling she began a long struggle with sentences culled from the papers. Perhaps, in another year, she would be able to read the headlines herself. Who could tell?

That story of courage, persistence and ultimate victory has been repeated century after century in every corner of the world. Men and women who found themselves in hopelessly restricted careers have fought their way out of their dismal corner and finally entered the world of their dreams. Nathaniel Hawthorne had to earn his daily bread by working as a clerk in a custom house, but before and after business hours he found time to write his immortal stories. Thomas Macaulay was employed in the British War Office, but in odd moments of the day and night he sketched and finally completed his *Lays of Ancient Rome.* And what shall we say of the thousands of less famous individuals who, even though they had to live in a dreary neighborhood and follow an ordinary career, set their mind free to share the wisdom and the beauty of the centuries? These men and women prove to the rest of us that a person's world is as big or as small as he makes it, and that his life-

work is as inspiring or as desolate as he himself decrees it shall be.

How can you live in Goshen?
Said a friend from afar.
This is a wretched little place
Where people talk about tawdry things
And plant cabbages in the moonlight. . . .

But I do not live in Goshen, I answered.
I live in Greece
Where Plato taught and Phidias carved.
I live in Rome
Where Cicero penned immortal lines
And Michelangelo dreamed things of beauty.
Do not think my world is small
Because you find me in a little village.
I have my books, my pictures, my dreams,
Enchantments that transcend Time and Space.
I do not live in Goshen at all,
I live in an unbounded universe
With the great souls of all the ages
For my companions.[5]

VI

Some of us have found the greatest encouragement of all in the realization that God often makes an extraordinary use of ordinary people. At the time,

[5] Edgar Frank, *Goshen.*

their career seems commonplace and their achievement pitifully limited. But as the years pass, and the interrelationships of human lives become plain, it appears that these apparently insignificant individuals had set loose in the world influences for good that will never die. Their career was not an ordinary one at all. The recent biography of James J. Davis, Secretary of Labor under President Wilson, gives a striking illustration. Mr. Davis pays this extraordinary tribute to his mother. "My mother was always singing. Her voice was my consolation and delight. One of the most vivid recollections of my boyhood is the picture of my mother standing at our gate with a lamp in her hands, sending one boy to his work in the mills and welcoming another boy home. My brother was on the day-shift and I was on the night-shift. This meant that he left home just as I left the mills, about half past two in the morning. On dark nights, and most of them were dark at that hour, my mother, realizing that my little brother was afraid, would go with him to the gate and, holding an old-fashioned lamp high in her hands, sing an old Welsh song while he trudged out bravely into the dark. She would keep singing till he disappeared in the glare of light from the stacks, and then, as he passed from

her sight, I would walk wearily out of that same glare and find my way home, guided by my mother's lamp and her song. The memory of her music has made my whole life sweet. When blue days come, and hardships force me to despair, I turn my thoughts to her, and from her spirit my own takes hope again."

How has God brought courage and high ideals into this dark world of ours? Through unnumbered common people, each holding aloft his little lamp and sending his brave song out through the night. How will God bring to the America of to-morrow the tolerance and the good will, the intelligence and the generosity the new nation will so deeply need? Through thousands of common folk, each surrounding his children with affection and noble incentive. Yours is an ordinary career? But it is through the people who are in ordinary careers that God does most of His work for mankind.

> The healing of the world
> Is in its nameless saints. Each separate star
> Means nothing, but a myriad scattered stars
> Break up the night and make it beautiful.[6]

[6] Bayard Taylor.

CHAPTER III

TAKING SECOND PLACE GRACEFULLY

I

PERHAPS the most familiar story in the Old Testament is that of David and Goliath. Generations of children have been brought up on it, and the details have become part of the folklore and the literature of our race. The sequel to that story is less familiar but far more suggestive for modern life. When Saul returned after the battle he expected to be received enthusiastically by his grateful subjects. But to his immense chagrin he discovered he was not the center of attention. The villagers were giving him credit, to be sure, for slaying thousands of Philistines. But then they were adding that David had killed ten times as many. How their song must have angered the king! "The women sang to one another: Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands!" So this was the reward for all Saul's services! Shoved unceremoniously into second place while most of the honor and glory went to a man

who, when all was said, had merely been lucky with his sling-shot. No wonder Saul was furious. No one enjoys being awarded second place, least of all a tribal chieftain three thousand years ago.

Saul was not the last man to encounter this irritating situation. Sooner or later, life forces all of us to accept a subordinate position. Some of us began to meet that experience when we were small children. There were other boys and girls in our family, and one day we woke up to the unpleasant fact that they were far more gifted than we. In spite of all our hard work, and in spite of parental assurances that all the children were equals, we soon discovered that we could not keep pace with the achievement of our rivals. How embarrassing to discover that we were known as someone's small brother, or someone's less attractive sister! In school and college the same situation persisted. We had always fancied we would be one of the leaders of the class—a hero in athletics, a prize-winner in scholarship, one of the class officers at graduation. Then we had to learn that though there may be sixty men on a football squad, there are only eleven men on the first team, and only one captain on the field. How it galled us to deflate our dreams and slip down into second, third, or even

fourth place! Still harder were the readjustments of later years. Sooner or later all men in the fifties and sixties must surrender their position to a successor. Not easy to see this intruding youngster take over the business, rearrange the school's policies, or preach a new gospel from the old pulpit! Sooner or later most mothers must watch some stranger enter the family circle and take first place in the life and affection of one of the children. What does marriage mean but that? Second place for father and mother, and first place for a newcomer—and usually a very youthful and puzzling newcomer, too.

> The people people own by birth
> Are often very queer,
> The people people work with best
> Quite shock your first idea,
> The people people choose as friends
> Your common sense appall,
> But the people people marry—they're
> The queerest ones of all!

II

It is an open secret that thousands of people fail utterly when life forces them to meet this problem. Saul was only one in a long succession of individuals who, however well they may fill first place, fail

lamentably in second. Some men and women, for example, openly refuse to surrender their primacy and persist in making a scene whenever they are asked to do so. The parents who attempt to manage the affairs of their married children belong in this group. So do a few ministers who, outstaying their welcome in a long-suffering parish, stubbornly cling to their post in spite of tactful suggestions that there are excellent opportunities elsewhere. Other individuals, forced toward a second place, finally make the move, but to do so with inward rebellion and ever-deepening bitterness. They never adjust themselves completely to the new situation, and invariably refer to their successor as an interloper. Saul, unable to accept David's success, threw spears at him. In our more peaceful age jealous individuals hurl bits of slander. It is safe to say that most of the malicious gossip which circulates in a modern community has its origin in the vindictiveness of individuals who are now filling a second rather than a first place. Most familiar of all are the people who, forced to take a defeat, vent their anger on innocent bystanders. One of our humorists has recently concocted a verse which describes almost perfectly this human type. The jingle is called "The Cradle-Song of a Golf Widow."

Hush-a-bye baby, pretty one sleep,
Daddy's gone golfing to win the Club sweep,
If he plays nicely (we hope that he will!)
Mother will show him the milliner's bill.
Hush-a-bye baby, stay close in your cot,
Daddy's come home and his temper is hot;
Cuddle down closer, darling of mine,
Daddy went round in one hundred and nine.

III

How can we solve this perennial and universal problem? How can we step down into a second place without irritation or resentment? Here are several facts all of us would do well to recall.

To begin with, we should remember that the process of passing from first to second place is a natural and a normal thing. It does not mean that the person who makes the change is losing his ability or his charm, or that he is entering a dreary period of diminishing usefulness. Rather it indicates that he has come to the end of one phase of his career and is now entering another. We all recognize and accept the situation in connection with the inevitable passing of our youthful athletic prowess. When we discover at thirty-five that youngsters half our age are much better at football than we are, we do not permit ourselves to be disturbed. We say quietly that our

football days are over, and that we are now engaged in much more important pursuits. When at forty we find that our children can demolish us on the tennis court, we congratulate them in all sincerity. We recall the memorable day when we defeated our parents, and then we slyly remind our children that a day will come when their children will drive one service ace after another past them. Would that all of us could take this same attitude when the time comes to make other and more difficult transitions! After all, it is the natural and normal thing for men in the fifties and sixties to delegate at least some of the heavier burdens of business and professional life to younger and stronger shoulders. This does not mean that the older men are "slipping." It certainly does not mean that they have suddenly lost their erstwhile value to the concern or the community. Rather it means that a time has come when their experience and their judgment, rather than their physical energy, are their main assets. Similarly, it is the natural and the normal thing for parents to let their children grow away from the home, form associations and friendships of their own, and eventually build new homes which they have the right to manage themselves. Such a change within a once-united family does not

mean that the parents are losing their charm, or that the children have suddenly grown forgetful and unappreciative. Rather it means that both groups—parents and children—are entering a new stage of life and growth.

The little Road says: Go,
The little House says: Stay,
And O it's bonny here at home
But I must go away.

The little Road like me
Would seek and turn and know,
And forth I must to learn the things
The little Road would show.

So go I must, my dears,
And journey while I may
Though heart be sore for the little House
That had no word but Stay.

Maybe no other way
Your child could ever know
Why a little House would have you stay
When a little Road says: Go.[1]

To resist changes like these, or to grow inwardly resentful when they make their demands upon us, is to

[1] Josephine Preston Peabody.

misunderstand life and complicate enormously not only our own but other people's problems.

A second fact, equally significant, is this. In many instances the man who fills second place has quite as many abilities and opportunities as the man in first place. To suppose that he is invariably an inferior, or to conclude that because he is in second place he is doomed to essential uselessness, is to misjudge the situation completely. Some months ago the world was thrilled by the sudden news that an aviator had succeeded in flying from New York to Paris. For the next few weeks reception committees and excited individuals vied with each other in lavishing praise on Colonel Lindbergh. Within thirty days he had received no less than 3,500,000 letters, 100,000 telegrams, and 14,000 packages. The avalanche of congratulations began while he was still in Paris. Ambassador Herrick found it necessary to detail eight men to the job of sorting the Lindbergh mail. By the time the hero returned to this country the unopened missives were waiting in heaps. In Washington one entire bus was filled with telegrams, three mail trucks were stuffed with letters, and ten one-ton delivery wagons had proved inadequate for the packages. A talking-machine company offered

the aviator $300,000 for the story of his flight told in his own words and recorded by their instrument. A motion-picture producer brought an offer of $500,000 for a few weeks' work before the camera. A European syndicate cabled a message promising Lindbergh $2,500,000 if he would make a trip alone around the world. No less than 5000 laudatory poems were dedicated to the "conqueror of the air," one of them beginning (in very free verse) "Fair-haired Apollo, your meteoric traverse of the Sea, your transcendent victory over boundless Space, shall thunder down the avenues of Time!" Such was the praise showered on the man in first place.

A few weeks later another American aviator made a flight across the Atlantic. As a matter of fact Chamberlin succeeded in reaching a spot much farther east than Paris. But what a contrast between the treatment accorded the man in first place and the man in second! According to reports that appeared in the daily press, Chamberlin had a difficult time persuading the United States government to pay even part of the cost of his flight. When he returned to this country with a relatively small collection of European medals he was asked to pay a duty of one hundred and twenty-four dollars upon them. Does this con-

trast between the welcome afforded the two aviators indicate accurately the relative ability of the two men? Certainly not! It took quite as much courage and skill to negotiate the second flight as it did the first. The man in second place was quite as able as the man in first, even though the latter—like David, centuries ago—received most of the attention and practically all the applause. Would that discouraged underlings in every enterprise could appreciate this truth! The mere fact that a man is in second place does not tell us—necessarily—what his abilities are. As a matter of fact, he may be the equal or even the superior of those who are ranked above him.

It is equally plain that the individuals in second place often have opportunities of immense magnitude. This is a fact which disappointed and disheartened people almost invariably overlook. They tell themselves that the chances for achievement are monopolized by the individuals who happen to be in prominent situations, and that second-raters must always remain in the insignificance to which fate has cruelly assigned them. But how false these notions are! Time and again the individuals who are in first place disappoint the world bitterly by their meager achievement. Time and again the men who occupy

second place discover there opportunities of startling greatness, and eventually win victories that transform the life of the race. It was an obscure machinist in Detroit who, half a century ago, built the first American gasoline engine and thus laid the foundations for the automobile industry of to-day. When Henry Ford was experimenting with that curious "toy" everyone in the vicinity would have agreed he was a second-rater. But did he remain forever in second place? It was a relatively unknown teacher of chemistry in France who, seventy-five years ago, began a series of experiments that finally gave the modern world its knowledge of germ-life and antiseptics, and thus made possible the surgery of to-day. When Louis Pasteur was beginning his work he was certainly not one of the prominent men of France. But did his insignificance prove permanent? Because a man happens to be—at the moment—in second place is no cause for discouragement. It certainly is no excuse for diminishing effort. The road from second place to first is always open, and thousands of men and women have found it surprisingly short.

Or consider the individuals who, inconspicuous themselves, kindle a spark of genius in the life of someone else, and in so doing make to mankind a

contribution of the first magnitude. A generation ago a six-year-old boy came home from school crying. He handed his mother the cruel note written by his teacher. It said bluntly that the boy was "too stupid to learn," and suggested that he be withdrawn from school. The boy's mother read the note and then drew herself up proudly. "My boy is not stupid," she said. "I will teach him myself and show them." That boy's name was Thomas A. Edison. A century ago another American mother learned to her dismay that her husband would be away from home for an indefinite period, and that she must assume full responsibility for the care and training of their small son. "I will try to take his father's place," she said, and for the next few years referred to herself persistently as "just a home-body." But her boy's name was Robert E. Lee. Granted that most of us find ourselves in insignificant places, as these two women certainly did. We still have our chance, our opportunity. Through the life of someone else we can make our contribution to the community and the world. What seems a second place may eventually prove far more significant than we think.

There is one more fact which has brought great courage and hope to some of us. There are times

when God holds us in a second place because there lies the work He has for us to do. We may be puzzled and disappointed, but in the course of time His wise and loving guidance becomes plain. Suppose we confess frankly that this is a faith to which most of us come only in the later years. During the teens and twenties this theory seems unconvincing, for the simple reason that as yet our varied experiences have little relation to each other, little bearing on any unified life-purpose. Many things happen, but in the welter of events no pattern emerges. But by the time we reach the thirties at least a few of our earlier experiences begin to slip into place. The events of boyhood disclose themselves as distinct preparations, and the thwartings of the past begin to reveal themselves as friendly guidances rather than inexplicable frustrations. By middle life most people recognize clearly an underlying purpose in their career. One of our ablest religious leaders writes, "As we look back on our own past the feeling is borne in upon us that Someone wiser than we are has had a hand in our affairs. We may not be able to prove the fact to others, and we probably should not care to try, because of the intimate nature of the facts involved. But for ourselves we cannot escape the

conviction that there were secret preparations for experiences years ahead, that we were intentionally encouraged here and thwarted there, and that the best things which happened to us came sometimes without our own effort and more than once directly in spite of it." [2] There is the experience of multitudes of people. There is the faith in God's guidance to which that experience has led them.

There are people all about us whose personal problem would be solved speedily if they would accept as true this interpretation of life, and begin to live quietly and steadily upon it. Years ago they set their heart on gaining a particular position, winning a certain success. Now, as old age approaches, they find themselves miles from their goal—bewildered, disheartened, oppressed by a deepening sense of failure. How can they accept the second place in which they find themselves, do it gracefully and happily? They must turn, as thousands of people have turned before them, to Christian faith. As Christians we are convinced that a God of love, wisdom and power stands behind this world of ours. He has a plan and a purpose for every human life. He is always doing everything that love can do to bring each one of us to the

[2] Henry Sloane Coffin.

place He wants us to fill, the work He wants us to do, the friends He wants us to serve. When we live at our best we yield ourselves to His love and care. Then God is able to carry out—swiftly or slowly—His purpose for us. He is at work in our lives to-day, shaping circumstance, overruling coincidence, counteracting mistakes and misfortunes, and gradually making all things work together for good. You and I find ourselves in a second place? But perhaps it is not a second place at all. Perhaps it is a first place, the place God Himself planned for us. In it lie our tasks, in it lie our opportunities. Some day its true splendor will become plain.

The tree that fell last year
Knows now just why it fell,
Why came that hell
Of axe and saw and leaping flame.
To the world's uses it was set
In ship and house and cabinet.
The tree
Knows now the plan
Of that, its agony.

So we shall some day know
Why life held blow on blow
And sacrificial fire,
Seeing some life stand firmer for our rout,

Or some brave, laughing ship of youth set out
The wiser for our pain.
So—knowing, seeing—we
Shall smile again
At this our Calvary,
And find its meaning plain.

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING TO FORGET

I

ONE of the most familiar verses in the Bible is a sentence in the letter which Paul sent his friends in Philippi. "Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal." Numberless sermons have been written on this text, most of them emphasizing the importance of rallying all one's energies and pushing forward toward the goal of one's desire. But hidden in this verse is another idea, one that is less familiar and perhaps more interesting. "Forgetting the things which are behind." Paul had discovered that life laid two entirely different duties upon him. One was to push his way resolutely forward into the future, meeting its opportunities and responsibilities with all the resourcefulness and courage at his command. The other was to keep his mind off the past, deliberately laying aside the recollection of

its unhappy events. Learning how to achieve was only part of the discipline of life. Learning how to forget was quite as important.

The more we study people the more clearly we appreciate the necessity of this second task. Scores of the men and women about us lead unhappy and ineffective lives for the simple reason that they have never broken free from their own past. Each new day is shadowed by the recollection of earlier tragedies. Each fresh opportunity serves only to call to mind the wasted chances of long ago. Consider, for example, the individual pictured in this poem by Aline Kilmer.

> There is a mirror in my room
> Less like a mirror than a tomb,
> There are so many ghosts that pass
> Across the surface of the glass.
>
> When in the morning I arise
> With circles round my tired eyes,
> Seeking the glass to brush my hair
> My mother's mother meets me there.
>
> If in the middle of the day
> I happen to go by that way,
> I see a smile I used to know—
> My mother, twenty years ago.

But when I rise by candle-light
To feed my baby in the night,
Then whitely in the glass I see
My dead child's face look out at me.

A person with such mental habits can hardly expect to live a happy or an effective life. Every hour of the day ghosts from the past come creeping into the present, and cast their grim chill over the future. Until that woman learns to bring her unhappy memories under control she will remain a problem not only for herself but also for all the people about her. In sharp contrast is the individual described in another recent verse.

Who bears in mind misfortunes gone
  Must live in fear of more,
The happy man whose heart is light
  Gives no such shadows power.
He bears in mind no haunting past
  To start his week on Monday,
No graves are written on his mind
  To visit on a Sunday.
He lives his life by days, not years,
  Each day's a life complete
Which every morning finds renewed
  With temper calm and sweet.[1]

[1] W. H. Davies.

Is there any question which of these two individuals finds life happier? Is there any question which one can give the better account of himself amid its ever-changing burdens and opportunities?

II

Anyone who watches people carefully will soon discover three sets of memories which all of us should keep under unwavering control. Failure to do so betrays us into immense but essentially needless misery. To begin with, we must learn to forget our own past failures. In the course of the years even the most successful people accumulate a sorry collection of disastrous ventures. They range all the way from the sermon that proved ineffective to the friendship from which we expected a great deal, but which actually gave us nothing. Every business man has his list of undertakings which did not prove financially profitable. Every lawyer can count up at least a few cases which he did not win. Every doctor has his group of erstwhile patients now seeking medical advice elsewhere. No one of us, however highly rated by the community, is always successful. All of us can, if we are foolish enough to do so, call from the grave the ghosts of a dozen sorry failures.

But what happens when we do this? What effect do these dismal recollections have upon our mind and spirit? One of the leading neurologists of England has recently reported a curious experiment which he carried on with three soldiers in the British army. "I asked the three men to submit themselves to a test designed to measure the effect of their mental attitude on their physical strength, this strength to be registered by a single gripping-device operated by the right hand. I tested the three men under three different conditions—first in their normal state, then under hypnosis when I was telling them they were very weak, and then under hypnosis when I was telling them they were very strong. In their normal state these three men had an average grip of 101 pounds. When, under hypnosis, I told them they were very weak their utmost effort registered only 29 pounds. One of the soldiers (who happened to be a pugilist) remarked that his arm 'felt tiny, just like a baby's.' But when, still keeping the men under hypnosis, I told them they were very strong their average strength jumped back to the normal 101 pounds and then rose to 142 pounds. They were actually 40 per cent stronger when they believed they were strong, and actually 70 per cent weaker when they believed

themselves weak." [2] What happens when you and I brood over our own past failures? We suggest repeatedly to ourselves that we are clumsy and ineffective. Those reiterated suggestions have a fatal effect on our flow of energy and courage. They gradually restrict our range of power, crowd us down to the low level of our mean self-evaluation. No one is arguing for a bumptious self-confidence or an ironclad conceit. But experience has shown repeatedly that until a man learns to throw off his memories of failure and the sense of personal inadequacy which these memories create, he will never be able to muster for the new tasks of life his full quota of energy and courage.

What is the first step in conquering memories of failure? How can a man who has had more than his share of mishaps begin to shake free from the incubus of unhappy recollection and deepening self-distrust? Some of us have found immense help in the realization that circumstancé often plays as large a part in misfortune as do human blunders. The sermon that failed may have failed because the church auditorium was a few degrees too warm or too cold, not because the sermon itself was poorly constructed

[2] J. A. Hadfield, *The Psychology of Power*, p. 11.

and inadequately delivered. The business venture that went wrong may have done so because the general financial situation was unfavorable, not because the venture itself deserved to fail. The friendship that faded may have done so through no fault of ours. To assume full responsibility for all the unhappy experiences of the past is to claim far too large a share of the load. Many older people still recall vividly the presidential campaign of 1884, in which Grover Cleveland defeated James G. Blaine by the slender majority of 37 electoral votes. Had Blaine held rather than lost New York State he would have gone to the White House. What was responsible for his defeat in New York State? Two coincidences, for neither of which could the Republican organization be held responsible. The first disaster came when a minister from Brooklyn, addressing Mr. Blaine at a semi-private gathering, said, "We are Republicans, and we do not propose to desert you for a party the antecedents of which have been Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion." Mr. Blaine's managers did everything in their power to conceal that unfortunate reference, but it was instantly taken up by the anti-Republican papers and cost Mr. Blaine thousands of votes. The other disaster came when a heavy storm swept upper

New York State on election day. The farmers, on whose votes Mr. Blaine was counting heavily, could not reach the polls, and their absence proved fatal to the Republican candidate. Two weeks after the election Mr. Blaine wrote a friend, "I feel quite serene over the result. As the Lord sent us an ass in the shape of a preacher, and also sent a rain storm to lessen our vote in New York, I am disposed to feel resigned to the dispensation of defeat which flowed directly from those agencies." Was Blaine to blame for his failure? No more than you are to blame for all the mishaps in your career.

III

A second set of memories we must bring under control is made up of the recollections of other people's unkindness. Here again all of us accumulate during the years a great number of unpleasant experiences. Sometimes the unkindness of other people reveals itself in sarcastic comments on the work we are doing and the way in which we are doing it. Recently an elderly lady was asked whether her minister was a good preacher. There was a moment of ominous silence, and then with cruel sweetness the lady replied, "He is an excellent man at

funerals." Comments like that are sure to be passed on, sure to arrive eventually at the parsonage. How easy for the minister to file them in his memory for future reference! Sometimes the unkindness of other people shows itself in actions that are contemptibly small and mean. Every family has its quota of quarrels, estrangements and misunderstandings that can be traced back to someone's attempt to trick a relative out of a few dollars, or someone's desire to volunteer unsolicited advice and administer a supposedly necessary snub. How many individuals, encountering such an experience, store it away in the mind and persistently refuse to undertake a spiritual housecleaning! Sometimes the unkindness of other people expresses itself in cruel remarks passed upon our children, or mean tricks played upon them. Many people who can summon enough self-control to overlook injuries to themselves, balk completely when they are asked to overlook an injury done to their child. There, they insist, forgiveness stops. There an undying feud begins.

But what happens when we permit ourselves to hold a grudge? What goes on within our mind and spirit when we accumulate resentments and brood over them? Obviously we work no harm to the

people who have injured us. The only thing we do is overthrow our own physical and psychical balance. One of the professors at the Harvard Medical School writes, "It is surprising to see how many people will keep a careful watch on their weight, their blood-pressure and their digestive apparatus, but all the time pay no attention to those conflicts within the mind which eventually betray themselves in a dozen ways. The father of a family will consult his physician about a high blood-pressure, but say nothing about the fact that he is no longer on speaking terms with his own son. Innumerable people will go to doctors to complain of headaches and weakness, or will tell their friends they are suffering from fainting attacks, while all the time they conceal the emotional disturbances within the self which are largely responsible for their troubles." [8] Such individuals, treasuring the memory of unhappy experiences in the past, never succeed in solving the problem of living. Rather they make the problem more and more difficult by their stubborn refusal to forgive and forget.

How can we rid ourselves of these disturbing memories? There seems only one way, the way which Jesus found centuries ago. We must face the unkind-

[8] See Charles Macfie Campbell, *Mental Disorders,* p. 17f.

ness of other people, and then deliberately forgive. The caustic comments on our work, the mean tricks played upon us, the unjust treatment accorded to our children—all must be resolutely put out of the mind. You say such an act is impossible? It may seem so to-day. But we learn to forgive and forget just as we learn to do every other difficult thing—by patient, deliberate and long-continued practice. Where did Jesus gain the power to forgive the soldiers who nailed Him to the cross? Where did He acquire that almost incredible self-mastery which enabled Him to pray for them? Behind that achievement in forgiveness lay years of patient and persistent self-discipline. If we undertake a similar self-culture we may hope to share, in some measure, His victory.

IV

There is one other set of dangerous memories all of us must learn to control. We must never permit ourselves to debate what might have happened had we made our choices differently. Of all the short-cuts to inner restlessness this is the shortest. Within half an hour you can plunge yourself into hopeless despair if you begin to resurrect and explore your own vanished alternatives. Suppose you had chosen

another career, suppose you had settled in a different community, suppose you had married someone else, suppose you had given the children another type of training, suppose. . . . Let your fancy run down those pathways and before long you will find yourself utterly lost. Are there no certainties anywhere? Has all life been a succession of missteps in the dark? Robert Frost has caught this mood of speculation and despair in a memorable verse entitled "The Road Not Taken":

> Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
> And sorry I could not travel both
> And be one traveller, long I stood
> And looked down one as far as I could
> To where it bent in the undergrowth,
>
> Then took the other, as just as fair
> And having perhaps the better claim
> Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
> Though as for that the passing there
> Had worn them really about the same.
>
> I shall be telling this with a sigh
> Somewhere ages and ages hence:
> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
> I took the one less travelled by. . . .
> And that has made all the difference!

How can we master moods and memories like these? The next time you find yourself falling victim to them remind yourself that you know nothing—literally nothing—about the road not taken. You imagine it is a fine, straight road, and that had you followed it you would have come directly to the land of heart's desire. But that is sheer supposition. The road not taken might have been even longer and more wearisome than the road you did choose. It might have brought you to places infinitely darker than the ones through which you have found your way, and it might have given you none of those vistas of delight that have been your happiest experiences. Had you taken that other road twenty years ago every subsequent choice in your life would have been different, and there is just as much reason to say that your life, as a whole, would have proved less satisfying as there is for saying it would have proved more satisfying. No one knows, or will ever know, where the road not taken would have led. How foolish to break one's heart over an uncertainty, to lament mistakes that may not have been mistakes at all!

Recently a columnist, writing for the sports page of a California daily, published a paragraph that

began with fun and ended with a rare bit of philosophy: "Yesterday I played golf with a man I hope I shall never see again. He had the worst case of 'Iffing' I have ever known. After each hole he would tell me with great seriousness how well he would have done *if* one of his shots had been different. 'If my drive had been straight,' he would say, 'I would certainly have made that hole in par. A straight drive, the good approach I did get, and then two putts on the green—I would have made that hole in four!' But the man forgot that if his drive had been different every subsequent shot would have been different too. A perfect drive would have so excited this fellow that he would have flubbed everything thereafter. In the game of life no one knows what would have happened had one stroke been different. We might have broken the record for the course, or we might have driven into every sand-trap and pond on the premises. No one can tell which. Motto: Don't be an Iffer."

It is at this point that Christian faith makes an immense contribution to the life of many people. What do they believe as they face successive crossroads? They are convinced they do not face them alone. Around their puzzled mind is the sure wisdom

of God. Around their tired heart is the undefeated strength of the Most High. Around their confusion and need is the unfailing love of One who knows the end from the beginning. They stand at the cross-roads, make the wisest and bravest decision they can, and then move resolutely forward with no glances behind. They dare to believe that when they live for the best and act for the best God works in them, around them, and beyond them, leading them finally to the right path and the right destination. This is the faith that has heartened numberless pilgrims on dark and uncertain roads. For them it has been literally "the victory that overcomes the world."

CHAPTER V

RESHAPING ONE'S OWN PERSONALITY

I

In a current volume entitled *The Sermons of a Chemist* Dr. Edwin E. Slosson has printed this quaint jingle. It suggests the variety of traits found within each human life.

> Within my earthly temple there's a crowd:
> There's one of us that's humble, one that's proud,
> There's one that's broken-hearted for his sins,
> And one that unrepentant sits and grins,
> There's one that loves his neighbor as himself,
> And one that cares for naught but fame and pelf.
> From much perplexing care I would be free
> If I could once determine which is Me!

As we look back over the years we realize how true those words are. All these selves have appeared at times within your life and mine. On occasion the best people do things for which they are later heartily ashamed. Similarly, the worst people have moments of undoubted nobility. Good people are not good all

the time. Certainly bad people are not always bad.

Where do these many selves come from? For centuries that question puzzled men greatly. The best answer they could devise was that the devil was responsible for the bad actions of good people, or that the sin of Adam had given a strange and unfortunate twist to an otherwise admirable human nature. Where the good traits in bad people originated our ancestors were not so sure. To-day, thanks to the advance of science, we understand this situation more fully. We realize that these varied traits represent differing inheritance-strains drawn from a vast array of forbears. Have you ever figured out how many direct ancestors you have had during the past few centuries? Two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great-grandparents—and then how the numbers jump! In the tenth generation back you have—in that one generation—more than one thousand direct ancestors. In the twenty-first generation back (and that was only six or seven centuries ago) you have—in that one generation—more than two million forbears. It so happens that six centuries ago the entire population of England, seriously cut down by the ravages of the

plague, numbered less than two million. Thus, if all your ancestors were of pure English stock, and if there were no cross-connections between widely-separated branches of your ancestry, you have within your personality to-day the commingled traits of all the people living in England in the fourteenth century. Fortunately these inherited traits have been greatly modified during the period of transmission. The cruder qualities of the cutthroat and the highwayman have been slowly brought under control. The finer qualities of lords and ladies have been gradually strengthened. But all the same there is within your life to-day this amazing conglomeration of inheritance-strains. Is it any wonder there are times when even the best people feel like playing Falstaff or Captain Kidd? Is it surprising that even in the worst people the Puritan makes an occasional appearance?

> I am like a stream that flows
> Full of cold springs that arose
> In morning lands, on distant hills,
> And down the plain my channel fills
> With melting of forgotten snows.[1]

The more we think about that stanza the truer it seems.

[1] Alice Meynell, *A Song of Derivations.*

II

This explains, in part at least, why people who have poor prospects at birth sometimes achieve greatness in later years. A fine inheritance, temporarily submerged in the stream of life, makes a sudden and unexpected appearance. A gifted personality develops and then, assuming that outward circumstances are not too hostile, a fine career follows. Doctor Fosdick gives several illustrations. "Shakespere was the son of a bankrupt butcher and a woman who could not write her own name. Beethoven was the child of a confirmed drunkard and a mother who was the victim of tuberculosis. Schubert was the offspring of a peasant father and a woman in domestic service. Michael Faraday was born in a loft over a stable, his father a broken-down blacksmith and his mother a common drudge." How do we explain the achievement of these unpromising boys? Circumstance undoubtedly had something to do with their success. Their own resolute effort must certainly be mentioned. But in the final analysis, each boy possessed an element of genius. And what is genius? Apparently it is the fortunate combination of a variety of fine inheritance-strains, reëmerging simultaneously in

the stream of life and uniting to form a personality of singular power.

It is against this background that you must study your own problem of self-change and self-culture. Your personality is not something solid, fixed, and uniform in texture like a stone or a piece of wood. Rather it is something curiously complex and susceptible of infinite change. We might compare it to a hand of cards, fortuitously chosen and now held together in a familiar sequence. Each card in the hand represents an inheritance of greater or less value drawn from some shadowy ancestor of long ago. Under normal circumstances the cards retain their present arrangement, with the high cards obligingly displayed on top. But we all know from sorry experience how readily and rapidly the cards can be rearranged, and how suddenly the hand can assume a wholly different aspect. In moments of nervous and physical exhaustion our finer qualities seem to vanish utterly. It is as though the high cards slipped from the top of the hand and concealed themselves at the bottom. In their place two-spots and three-spots stare at us disconcertingly. Then again, in moments of crisis and sudden inspiration, qualities finer than any we thought we possessed make their brave appear-

ance. We suddenly prove to be nobler men and women than we or anyone else dreamed. Did you ever hear how many possible combinations are concealed within an ordinary pack of fifty-two playing cards? That pack can be dealt into more than 635,000,000,000 different assortments of thirteen cards each. To be exact, the number is—as any mathematician can speedly compute—635,013,559,600. If those are the possibilities in a pack of only fifty-two cards, think of the possibilities in a human personality containing the traits passed on by numberless ancestors!

III

Are there any limits to this process of rearranging the traits within a human life? When we think carefully we soon recognize three distinct limitations on our efforts to reconstruct a personality. Perhaps if we continue to use the analogy of a pack of cards we can suggest clearly what they are. To begin with, we cannot stuff a new card into the hand—no matter how much we may desire to do so. If your child has no ear for music nothing you can do at this late date will give him one. The precise inheritance you hoped he would have was omitted from his original make-

up, and there is no way by which you can now thrust it in. Reconstructing a personality does not mean putting into the personality traits that were originally absent. The second limitation on our efforts is less obvious but quite as significant. We cannot change the value of any single card within the hand. The two-spot can never be manipulated into a king or even into a ten-spot. A deuce it is, and a deuce it will remain down to the end of the game. If your child has only ordinary mechanical gifts you will never be able to transform him into a mechanical genius. More highly gifted rivals will always distance him in the race for achievement. Your child's limited faculties may be highly trained, but they never can be increased in extent. Reshaping a personality does not mean enlarging the native power of traits within that personality.

The third limitation on our efforts becomes increasingly clear as we grow older. A time comes in every life when further rearrangement of the personality becomes almost, if not quite, impossible. Here, of course, our analogy of the pack of cards breaks down. The bits of pasteboard can be shuffled and reshuffled, dealt and redealt, until they literally fall to pieces. Not so these selves of ours! After a certain

period the human personality seems to lose—under normal circumstances—its capacity for radical change, and the precise arrangement of our inheritance-strains becomes fixed. We all know elderly people of whom this is fortunately or unfortunately true. They have kept certain qualities, good or bad, in control for so many years that only a miracle could now effect a change in the familiar aspect of the self. Similarly, other qualities have been buried for so many years that a resurrection of these qualities seems impossible. In the technical language of psychology the habit-patterns of these elderly individuals are now fixed. Reshaping a personality does not mean changing the entire make-up of human beings during the last few years of life. Most of us realize that such a change would do violence to the laws of life.

But when we have made these admissions what opportunities for self-culture and self-reconstruction still lie open before us! Fine qualities that have been buried for years can be slowly lifted to the surface and made the new and the dominant features of a rebuilt self. Unfortunate traits that have been long in control can be slowly but relentlessly thrust into the background. This is not theory. These are the facts of life, facts observed day after day by those whose

work it is to deal with people. Consider this instance, recently quoted by Judge Miriam van Waters of the Los Angeles Juvenile Court. "When Sally was first brought to us she was a frail girl of twelve, with spinal curvature, a weak heart, and a pronounced tendency to nervousness. Her intelligence was only dull average. She had a bad temper, swore violently, flatly refused to go to school, and proved incorrigible in each of the three private homes in which we placed her. Transferred to an institution, her behavior there was a cause of grave anxiety. Her habit of running away yielded to the influence of no one except the superintendent, and there were times when even this woman could not control her. One day she disappeared with a young man she had picked up on the streets. The next morning he deserted her, and she went back to her parents in terror and disgrace. When they learned what had happened they threw her out of the house. The police found her and brought her once more to our Court. Obsessed with fears for the future Sally begged us to send her away to her sister, a married girl of twenty. In that home she came under normal influences and saw for the first time what happy home life is. She became devoted to her sister's baby, and then one day a young

ranchmen fell desperately in love with her. They were married and now Sally has changed completely. She is a patient, hard-working wife and mother, with a healthy, well-cared-for baby, a ranch, and a fine bungalow. Her devotion to her husband and her child, her pride in her home, and her gentleness with animals are evident to anyone. Every trace of her earlier waywardness has vanished, and her past history would never be guessed—even by the most experienced worker with delinquents." [2] How do we explain such a transformation? Nothing new had been thrust into that girl's personality. No single trait in her nature had been increased in its native potency. But fine qualities long hidden had been made dominant, and evil qualities long in control had been thrust into the background. The final result of these changes was the emergence of what seemed a wholly new self.

Can such transformations take place in the years after youth? Can older people hope to rearrange their personality? The experience of Tolstoi may well give us courage and hope. Up to middle life he was one man. After middle life he was another. Here is his own account of the change that took place

[2] See Miriam van Waters, *Youth in Conflict*, p. 188.

within him just before he reached middle age. "Five years ago I came to believe in Christ's teaching, and my life suddenly changed. I ceased desiring what I had wanted before, and I began to desire what I had never wished for. What formerly seemed good now appeared bad, and what had seemed bad now appeared good. The direction of my life and my desires shifted. Good and bad changed places." [8] Granted that the older we grow the more difficult the task of self-reconstruction becomes. The work can still be done, down to a period far later in life than many disheartened individuals suppose. The tapestry of the self can be unraveled, and the threads woven into a new and a more beautiful pattern.

IV

What are the steps in this process of self-change and self-culture? To begin with, anyone who hopes to reshape his own personality must face his own faults and his own conduct-problems honestly. Most people are unwilling to do this. They have heard so much about the evils of introspection, and they have been told so often that a man must believe in himself if he hopes to make other people believe in him, that

[8] Count Leo Tolstoi, *My Religion.*

they deliberately and persistently avoid self-scrutiny and cultivate an unassailable cocksureness. Such individuals tell themselves that their unfortunate outbursts of temper are due to the mean things said and done by the *other* members of the family. The thought that the real cause of the difficulty lies in their own defective self-control never occurs to them. The first step in the direction of intelligent and effective self-improvement is to recognize frankly one's own shortcomings. Professor Campbell of the Harvard Medical School has stated the facts admirably. "While it is doubtless impossible for any person to transcend the limits of his own endowment, it is possible for him to eliminate from his personal equation such distorting factors as constitutional weaknesses, disturbing memories, underlying biases, moral laziness, and cowardice. A systematic review of one's own personality with the aim of modifying it is not a mere intellectual diversion. It is a dynamic process which makes the resources of the individual more fully available for the tasks of life." [4]

Those who seek to reconstruct their own personality will also do well to give themselves new interests and objectives. Why? Because new interests

[4] Charles Macfie Campbell, *Delusion and Belief*, p. 78.

and objectives call forth in the personality hitherto undetected powers. Repeatedly we find that all some individuals need to precipitate far-reaching changes in themselves is something new to think about and work for. Here, of course, lies the secret of the remarkable improvement which we note in many young people during the early years of marriage and parenthood. The new interests and responsibilities of the new home enable these young people to "find themselves," and gradually disclose within them capacities for patience, endurance and affection which even they did not dream existed. Repeatedly social workers make use of this principle in their efforts to reconstruct warped and ineffective personalities. A new interest and a new objective are ingeniously thrust into a human life, and presently the whole pattern of the self changes. One of our most experienced social workers reports this incident. "One of the most difficult problems ever presented to us was that of an unhappy woman of fifty who was living with her mother in two dreary rooms. The two women had practically nothing to do, and so few things happened in their tiny world that they fell into the dangerous habit of telling each other all day long how wretchedly they felt. How could they be

rescued from that hopelessly introspective state? We succeeded in persuading the daughter to go to work in an arts-and-crafts shop. There the comings and goings of the customers, the sight of new things, and the steady stream of conversation on every side gave the daughter a wholly new set of interests. She carried the news home at the end of the day for the vicarious enjoyment of her mother, and within a short time the atmosphere of the home changed perceptibly. One day the daughter said to us with a smile, 'I never knew before that mother and I could find so many cheerful things to talk about.' " [5] It makes little difference what new interests and objectives we set before ourselves. As long as the new goal is worthy and alluring it is almost certain to work its magic upon us.

It is also clear that those who hope to change themselves for the better must make it a rule never to give expression to the unfortunate traits they are trying to suppress. Our evil inheritances must be ruthlessly crowded into the background of the self, and the only way by which we do this is to refuse to let them appear—no matter what the provocation

[5] Karl de Schweinitz, *The Art of Helping People Out of Trouble*, p. 207.

or the excuse—in the center of the stage. Perhaps a typical conversion-story from the annals of the Salvation Army will make this point clear. "One night in March 1915 a man who had been pronounced a hopeless drunkard staggered into our meeting in New York. The story of his downfall was pitiful. He was the child of excellent parents, and during boyhood he had received a fine training in Sunday school as well as at home. But in the late teens he began to drink, and before many years his appetite for liquor had the better of him. He tried many treatments and cures, but no one of them did him permanent good. He sank lower and lower, and finally lost not only his work but also his friends and his home. Several times he attempted suicide, and on no less than fourteen different occasions he was taken to the alcoholic ward in different hospitals. The doctors pronounced his case hopeless, and prophesied that he would eventually die in a drunken stupor. But nothing of the kind happened. That night at our meeting he was suddenly converted. Something that was said swept his evil self out of sight, and lifted into momentary control the finer qualities buried since boyhood. But what was the practical problem thrust before this convert? For the next few weeks

and months he had to keep his evil nature under relentless control. One slip, and every gain would be lost. To the man's everlasting credit he kept his better self on top, and eventually conquered completely the evil forces that had apparently conquered him. In the course of time he reëstablished himself in the community and eventually became the editor of the local newspaper in a city near New York." [6] Why is it that so many of us who have far less complicated character-problems remain unimproved from year to year? Not because we make no new resolutions. Rather because, when the battle between the higher self and the lower is joined, we surrender at some apparently inconsequential point and presently find our whole campaign has been lost. It does not take much of a man to make a new start in life. But it does take all there is of him.

There is one other suggestion to be made to the people who seek to reconstruct their own personality. As they struggle to make their finer traits dominant they will find it immensely helpful to expose themselves regularly to the spiritual influences they find inspiring. Obviously these influences vary with dif-

[6] An incident reported by the Springfield Salvation Army in March, 1923.

ferent people. One man derives his greatest spiritual stimulus from music, another from friendship, another from contact with the beauty and the silence of Nature. Nearly everyone finds immense incentive in religious faith, and the accompanying acts of religious devotion. The reason is that in these religious beliefs and exercises we find the concentrated wisdom, aspiration and beauty of the centuries. The music, the poetry, the prayers heard in our churches have been gathered from many generations and many lands. They are the creation of many human beings, each living for the moment at his best. The message heard from our better pulpits is the noblest answer ever discovered to the riddle of existence. Faith in our power to transcend limitations, faith in a God who helps us whenever we do our best, faith in a Christ who found for all humanity the way to live, faith in an eternal life that opens before us after the experience of death—here are the convictions that have emerged during the centuries and that make up the simple and heroic creed by which numberless people have lived. Is it any wonder that psychiatrists and social workers repeatedly urge the men and women who are making a new start in life to avail themselves of the immense stimulus of re-

ligion? Repeatedly it has shown itself the source of that ultimate increment of power which turns defeat into victory. Scientists say that the soil of England is filled with the seeds of tropical plants, dropped there at a time when the climate was wholly different from what it is to-day. Those seeds have been waiting ever since for only one thing—for the right atmosphere. If it were provided they would immediately bud and blossom in unexpected splendor. What a parable of human life! Within our hearts are virtues and powers of unguessed beauty. They are waiting for only one thing. For a favorable climate in which to grow.

CHAPTER VI

WORKING WITHOUT A SENSE OF STRAIN

I

WHAT is it that brings on the feeling of exhaustion? Is it our work, or is it something else? Perhaps we can find an answer by studying the experience of children. Here is a boy of ten who is building an airplane. He is surrounded by strings, cardboard, rubber bands, and tiny pieces of wood. For an hour he works patiently, trying to fit the parts of his machine together. Curiously enough he gives no evidence of fatigue. He seems ready to continue his task indefinitely. Then suddenly his mother calls and says it is time to begin practicing on the piano. Reluctantly the boy starts downstairs. His work at the piano is certainly no more difficult than his work on the airplane. As a matter of fact, it is probably less exacting. There is no such demand for careful planning, unwavering attention, and perfect accuracy of movement. But within ten minutes the small boy gives clear evidences of fatigue. His face is flushed,

his voice is strained, his muscular coördinations are erratic, and presently he bursts out crying. Why do a few moments of easy work at the piano exhaust him, when an hour of hard work on the airplane did not? Anyone who understands human nature knows the answer. The thing that tires us is not mental or physical exertion. It is inward strain. Building the airplane was hard work, but it brought no feeling of inward tension. Practicing on the piano was easy work, but it was accompanied by an immense inward restlessness. The result was that ten minutes at the second job proved more wearing than a full hour at the first. One of the current treatises on applied psychology states the principle clearly. "Inner anxieties rather than external burdens are the things that wear us out."

This statement is borne out by the experience of numberless older people. Who are the men and women in your community who give evidences of nervous and physical exhaustion? If you watch carefully you will soon realize they are not—in the main—the people who are doing the most work. They are the men and women who have few real tasks but an immense collection of worries, regrets, and unsolved spiritual problems. Their external

burdens are few and light, but their sense of inward strain is overpowering. Conversely, who are the people who manage to carry a dozen heavy responsibilities without giving any evidence of exhaustion? They are the men and women who have learned to keep free from all sense of inward tension. We say that they work easily, that they live without friction. As a result of this acquired skill they succeed in doing twice as much as the average person, and doing it with only half or even a third the effort. The career of John Wesley provides a striking illustration. The amount of work he did seems almost incredible. His biographer writes, "Wesley always rose at four in the morning and planned to preach the first sermon of the day at five. By eight he was on his horse, ready for further appointments. Repeatedly he followed his early morning sermon by four or even five others before nightfall, riding ten or twelve miles on horseback between each address and the next. He kept this up for no less than fifty years, preaching an average of fifteen times a week for the entire half century. No other minister has ever done such a thing." [1] How did John Wesley do it? His biographer gives the answer in a single sentence. "Wesley's career is a strik-

[1] C. T. Winchester, *The Life of John Wesley*, p. 119.

ing proof of the fact that work without worry never kills."

If the sense of inward strain is so harmful, how can we get rid of it? Obviously there are some individuals who need the counsel and the help of a nerve-specialist or a psychoanalyst. Their sense of strain is rooted in sources so deep and so obscure that no one but an expert can locate them. But most people have no such serious difficulties to contend with. Their inward tensions are produced by unfortunate habits of thinking and working which can be readily discovered and easily corrected. Here are four of the commonest sources of the sense of strain.

II

Many people can trace their feeling of tension back to the habit of self-pity. Asked if they pity themselves, these people will reply indignantly that they do not. Then they will go on to explain with apparent conviction and enthusiasm how well they have done and how much they have to be thankful for. But the important fact to determine is not whether these people praise themselves in public but whether they pity themselves in private. Press back into the recesses of these minds and what do you

discover? Here is a man who, whatever he says about his work, feels in secret that his job is impossible. Is there anyone in the community who has to work so hard for such small pay? Is there anyone who has to deal with so many crabbed individuals and endure such a variety of exhausting strains? Is there anyone whose schedule for the coming week looks so hopeless? All this is self-pity, and self-pity of a peculiarly insidious type. Its immediate effect is to create within the personality a sense of strain which makes happy and effective living impossible. Or here is a woman whose domestic situation contains unfortunate elements. Outwardly this woman gives the impression of happiness, but inwardly how does she feel about herself? Again and again she raises the question whether her marriage was a mistake. Repeatedly she broods over the disappointments which have come to her and the satisfactions which she can never enjoy. Day after day she compares her life with the life of her friends. How well the world has treated them! How cruelly it has treated her! Here is self-pity, and self-pity of a most dangerous type. How can a woman with these mental habits and inner attitudes ever know the freedom, the quietness, the power of a finely organized

and well-disciplined personality? These things are beyond her reach until she frees herself from self-pity and the sense of strain which self-pity invariably generates.

How can we conquer self-pity? The most obvious way is to change our external situation, run away from the hardships and difficulties that create within us the feeling of tension. The trouble with this method of cure is that it can be employed in only a pitifully small number of cases. Most of us, even if our work is hard, must continue at it. Most of us, even if our home does bring problems and heartaches, must remain in it. Under such circumstances how can we break the habit of self-pity? Suppose we remind ourselves that our hardships and difficulties are not entirely a curse. To some extent they are a blessing. When all is said, it is these very burdens that call out our latent power and resourcefulness. It is the pressure of an overcrowded schedule that develops within us the capacity to get things done. It is the problems we encounter in marriage and parenthood that teach us self-control and forbearance. We are—in the end—finer people with our hardships than we would be without them. You think you would be better off if your situation were

easier? Life would undoubtedly be less exacting, but you yourself would not be what you are.

Seven years ago a British freighter sank during a hurricane on the Indian Ocean. The forty-four men in the crew clambered into two life-boats and started for the nearest bit of land, some 1700 miles away. Three of the men were seriously ill when that grim battle with the elements began. Here is the captain's own account of the subsequent adventures of the crew. "When we abandoned ship three of the sailors were sick. Two of them actually had to be lifted from their bunks and lowered into the life-boats. We expected these sick men to be the first to die, but as a matter of fact they survived the days and nights of hardship remarkably well. One of the men had been suffering from a discharging hip bone while on board ship. Two or three days after the vessel went down, when all of us were fighting for our lives on that lonely sea, his wound healed completely. He suffered no further pain from it till we reached land nearly three weeks later. Then curiously enough the wound broke out again. The other two men were suffering from severe colds when we abandoned ship. Yet in spite of their long exposure in an open boat, and in spite of the fact that we

could give them only very little food and water, they proceeded to get well. After two days in the lifeboat they were as good as ever. Apparently the additional mental and physical exertion the hard situation demanded brought about a cure." [2] People with the habit of self-pity would do well to ponder deeply that last sentence. Our difficulties do for us what those sailors' difficulties did for them. They bring out the latent best hidden deep within.

III

Another common source of inward strain is the faulty arrangement of our tasks. Have you ever counted up the number of things an active person to-day is expected to do? To begin with, he faces the primary obligation of earning a living. This main duty absorbs the major portion of his time and strength. But meantime a dozen minor obligations—all of them important and some inescapable—crowd in on every side. Local charities and philanthropies make their urgent appeal for workers. How can a public-spirited citizen refuse to serve on a team of solicitors? Meantime innumerable social obligations make their appearance. We must give at least some

[2] Cecil Foster, *1700 Miles in Open Boats*, p. 67f.

consideration to the interests and invitations of our neighbors, make at least some effort to keep our friendships in repair. In addition to these local duties we have of course certain duties to friends at a distance, particularly to the members of our own family. As old age draws on, these men and women need a special measure of attention and affection. Beside these obligations to other people each one of us has certain important duties to himself. Somehow or other he must keep his own mind and body in such condition that they can meet the exacting demands made upon them day after day. It is doubtful whether any generation ever faced such complicated situations and multiplied responsibilities as ours does. Certainly no generation ever lived and worked under such pressure. One of our humorists has recently reminded us that our ancestors would wait quietly in a roadside inn for two or three days if they missed a stagecoach. We, on the contrary, squawk angrily if we miss the first section in a revolving door!

What is the new duty this new situation forces upon us? We must learn to arrange our many tasks in such a way that we can handle them with a minimum of strain and lost motion. In a certain way our problem resembles that of the road-making

machines we see on so many highways. These machines must do a great many different things. First they must propel themselves to their scene of effort. Then they must dig up rocks, sand and roots, and then whirl around and deposit this material in a succession of empty trucks. Then they must prepare a new surface for the new road, carefully filling up the holes they themselves have dug. Then they must pack up and push on to the next location. Many duties, but there is enough power inside the mechanism to handle them all if they are attacked in the right sequence. But woe to the machine that tries to move, dig, carry, dump, fill, and move again all at once!

How should you arrange your tasks day by day? That is your problem in personal engineering, and no outsider can solve it for you. But as you face that problem ask yourself these questions. Have I learned the trick of handling my many jobs in sequence rather than trying to manage all of them at once? Have I gained such control of my own mind that I can concentrate all my attention on one task, and then move it (all of it) to the next? Is the place in which I work as free as may be from elements of distraction and confusion? Have I mastered the art

of keeping abreast of my work so that the element of mental strain produced by the recollection of unfulfilled duties is eliminated entirely? Here are personal disciplines quite as important as the acquisition of professional knowledge or technical skill. Here are ways by which people with burdens as numerous and heavy as yours learn to carry those burdens, and keep themselves free from the fatal sense of strain.

IV

Still another source of inward tension is the habit of noticing trivial annoyances which ought to be entirely overlooked. What are these annoyances? To begin with, we ought never to pay attention to our minor physical sensations. Trivial aches and pains, the feeling of weariness that descends upon us at the end of a long and busy day, the sense of discouragement that attacks us when we lose for a time the normal resilience of nerve and body—these are annoyances which should be overlooked entirely. If we lift them to the level of consciousness, or if we make the still more serious blunder of fixing our attention upon them, we promptly throw the normal processes of the body-brain mechanism out of gear

and create for ourselves serious but needless difficulties. When a man is hypnotized a pin-prick can be made to feel as deep and painful as a dagger-thrust. The reason is that the man's mind has been rendered over-sensitive by the suggestions of the hypnotist. Scores of people make their own minds over-sensitive by auto-suggestion, and then promptly magnify a simple intestinal disturbance into a threatened attack of appendicitis, or enlarge a normal feeling of fatigue into a warning of nervous breakdown. If such individuals hope to attain a quieter and more effective life they must learn the lesson all of us are supposed to learn during childhood—the lesson of disregarding minor physical sensations.

We ought also to overlook the hasty and unintelligent criticisms passed on us and our work by people who have no adequate basis of judgment. To take such remarks seriously is to betray ourselves into unnecessary unhappiness. The only criticisms you and I need consider seriously are those made by the relatively few individuals who know what we are trying to do, who understand the limitations under which we are working, and who appreciate the progress we have made. When people with this basis of judgment give us a kindly and dispassionate ver-

dict on ourselves and on our work we can never be grateful enough to them. But the comments of the jealous, the misinformed, the unappreciative and the openly hostile ought to be forgotten as soon as they are heard. When we stupidly let them linger in the mind, and then later recall them and brood over them, we subject ourselves to a cruel but essentially needless strain. The resultant loss of power is no one's fault but our own.

All this has a special meaning for the men and women who are passing the invisible and indefinable boundary between youth and middle age. During the teens and twenties it is fairly easy to throw off the fears and morbid states which occasionally make their attack upon us. We remind ourselves cheerfully that a long life lies ahead, and that we still have plenty of time in which to correct our mistakes and retrace any false steps. But as the thirties and forties pass, this attitude inevitably changes. How many people, approaching middle life, lapse slowly into fatal introspection and self-distrust! What if these stray aches and pains are "symptoms"? What if the remaining years of life are fewer than we think? What if the attitude of the younger people in the vicinity means that we are past our prime, and

that our successor is already planning how he can most adroitly usurp the throne? Here are the unfortunate questions which scores of people in middle life persist in asking. Here are the ultimate sources of that sense of strain which at times overwhelms them. What is the remedy for these self-imposed sufferings? These men and women must learn the lesson which thousands of middle-aged people have learned before them. Some sensations and some situations are not worth noticing. They must be quietly and deliberately overlooked. We must march resolutely forward, inwardly as well as outwardly unafraid. The future may well prove less disastrous than we think.

Better never trouble trouble
  Till trouble troubles you,
For you only make your trouble
  Double-trouble when you do.
And your trouble like a bubble
  That you're troubling about
May be nothing but a cipher
  With the rim rubbed out.[8]

V

Here is one more source of the sense of strain. It

[8] David Keppel.

is the habit of assuming responsibility for the situations which are frankly beyond our control. Many people have never learned to draw a distinction between the situations which they can manage and those they cannot. They worry about both, and as a result expose themselves to a double strain. Perhaps an illustration from a preacher's experience will make this point clear. There are certain things about a sermon which ought to give the preacher deep concern. The sermon should be thought out with the utmost care. It should be constructed with the best skill at the preacher's command, written and rewritten and then written again until the meaning of each phrase and sentence is crystal clear. Then the sermon should be delivered in the most effective fashion the preacher can devise. If this means long practice in the actual delivery of the sermon then the preacher must undertake this tedious work. These are the situations over which the preacher has control and for which he should assume full responsibility.

But there are other situations connected with the sermon for which the preacher is in no way responsible. Much as he may long to manage and control them he cannot possibly do so. To begin with, he

cannot compel people to listen attentively to what he says. They may deliberately put their thoughts on something else, or they may lack the capacity for sustained attention. In either case the sermon, however carefully prepared and delivered, will fail to influence them. Neither can the preacher determine what verdicts the congregation will pass upon the sermon. These verdicts will be affected to a surprising degree by situations over which the preacher has not the slightest control. A man who is naturally interested in philosophical and theological problems will find a sermon on the nature of God immensely stimulating. A man who is interested chiefly in business problems and ways of attaining greater personal efficiency will pronounce the same sermon insufferably dull. Most significant of all, the preacher can never compel anyone to put his sermon into practice. It may represent his best effort and may contain suggestions that would transform the daily life of his people. But if they lack the intelligence and the willpower to apply the sermon to themselves it will do them little or no permanent good.

Here then are two entirely different sets of situations—one of which the preacher can control, and the other of which he cannot. What happens if he

is foolish enough to assume responsibility for both sets rather than merely the one which he can manage? Instantly he piles on himself a burden too heavy to be borne. The resultant sense of strain makes preaching seem an impossible task, and presently this preacher either leaves the ministry or finds his joy in and his enthusiasm for preaching steadily waning. It would be interesting to determine how many of the disheartened ministers of to-day could trace their discouragement to the foolish habit of assuming responsibility not only for the sermons they preach but also for the verdicts passed on those sermons and the results accruing from them. It would be equally interesting to determine how many of the discouraged people in other careers could trace their sense of inward strain to the fatal practice of holding themselves responsible not only for those situations which are under their control but also for those which are not. How can men who have such unfortunate mental habits ever hope to live quiet, easy and effective lives?

All this explains what we mean by trusting God. It means that we do our best to carry our own share of life's load, and then leave everything else to a Wisdom, a Love, a Power greater than our own.

We do our daily work to the best of our ability, and then leave to God the matter of popular verdicts and ultimate results. We serve the community as best we can, giving it our keenest intelligence and our most generous effort. Then we place in God's hands the institutions we have created and the developments we have initiated, knowing that He is quite as much concerned in their ultimate success as we are. We face the strange adventure of the years in the bravest, wisest way we know. Then as old age nears and the deeper mystery of death approaches we trust ourselves quietly to the Everlasting Arms. What death will involve we do not know. But having done our best in the situations we can control, we trust all the others to the mercy and the love of God. "Cast thy burden on the Lord: He shall sustain thee." How the sense of strain vanishes as we follow that wisdom of long ago!

CHAPTER VII

KEEPING LIFE REASONABLY SIMPLE

I

WHAT was the problem of the first settlers in New England? This passage from the diary of Governor William Bradford of the Plymouth Colony suggests it clearly. Writing on November 11, 1620 Governor Bradford thus describes the difficulties confronting the Pilgrims when they finally landed in the new world. "Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed ye God of heaven who had brought them over ye vast and furious ocean and set their feet upon ye firm and stable earth, their proper element. But they had now no friends to welcome them, nor inns to refresh their weather-beaten bodies; no houses nor much less towns to repair to. The savage barbarians were readier to fill their sides with arrows than otherwise. As for ye season it was winter, sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms. What could they see about them but a hideous and

desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men? And if they looked behind, there was ye mighty ocean, now a main bar and gulf to separate them from all ye civil parts of ye world. What could sustain them now but ye spirit of God and His grace?"

The poverty and desolation of that little colony were all too evident. For months and years those first New Englanders had to grapple incessantly with hardship and danger. A year after Governor Bradford wrote the sentences just quoted he wrote in his diary that the settlers had for their second winter only one peck of corn a week for each person. What was the problem those men and women faced? It was the problem which has confronted every pioneer group in history. The problem of conquering poverty and limitations, and making daily life safer, happier, and more inspiring.

During the last three centuries that problem has been solved, as far as numberless American families are concerned. How different the New England of to-day from the New England the Pilgrims knew! Consider some of the obvious changes. The *Mayflower* brought to Plymouth only 102 people, of whom a tragically large proportion died during the

first winter. To-day there are more than 8,000,000 people in the six New England States. Governor Bradford and his neighbors were desperately poor. To-day even common people have a surprisingly extensive financial surplus. Daily life in the Plymouth colony was painfully simple and primitive. To-day more than 365,000 different articles are manufactured in the United States and distributed to every corner of the land. It is reported that we are making no less than 125 different varieties of face powder. What a difference between the New England of 1620 and that of 1930!

But if you look below the surface of modern life a far more significant change appears. In Governor Bradford's day living was a relatively simple process. Men and women needed only a few possessions, a small amount of equipment. They encountered only a few demands from other people. To-day the situation is radically different. For most people life has now become bewilderingly complex, and the demands put upon us have grown incredibly numerous. An American historian with a statistical turn of mind has recently made this curious statement. "A century ago there were about 72 different things which the average American wanted. Of these 16 might fairly

be termed necessities. To-day the average American wants no less than 484 different things, and considering the new conditions of daily life he needs fully 94 of them." What does this mean? It means that if you and I are to get along in the modern world we must have nearly six times as much equipment as our grandparents had. A telephone, a typewriter, an automobile—these are some of the more familiar bits of the new and necessary paraphernalia. If we want to live a thoroughly comfortable life to-day we need seven times as many luxuries as our grandparents had. An oil heater, an electric refrigerator, an expensive radio—how easy to count up the new and much-desired comforts! Naturally these new needs and new wants create a host of new demands. The most familiar is the demand for money—money to buy not only for ourselves but also for the institutions in which we are interested this ever-increasing amount of equipment. What is our problem in this new situation? Obviously it is not to enrich life. Rather it is to keep life reasonably simple.

II

The failure to solve this problem accounts for the unhappy situations we see in many American homes

to-day. We all know men and women who, accepting too many responsibilities and undertaking too many ventures, finally wear themselves out and ruin life not only for themselves but for the other members of their family. Less familiar but quite as pitiful are the parents who, driven by a hundred tasks, gradually lose all contact with their own children. The dean of one of our colleges recently made an extraordinary statement about the indifference of such individuals toward their own boys and girls. Basing his prophecy on his own past experience he says that if he writes to 100 fathers, informing them that their sons are in trouble at college and asking for the fathers' assistance, only 50 of the 100 fathers will ever reply. In 30 of the remaining cases the mothers will answer, each explaining with some embarrassment that her husband is too busy to give such matters his personal attention. In the 20 other cases neither father nor mother will even acknowledge his communication. What do we see in such situations? We see parents who have never learned to keep life simple, simple enough to be manageable. While these men and women are struggling with one set of duties and ambitions a more important set of responsibilities is entirely neglected.

Many modern writers sneer at the Puritan in his log cabin, the Puritan who offered his children only one book to read—a well-thumbed Bible. But is that Puritan half so sorry a failure as the modern father who knows nothing about the problems of his own children, or the modern mother who is so overwrought nervously that the family breathes a sigh of relief when she dashes out of the house and takes the atmosphere of tension with her?

How can we simplify modern life? What can we do to remove from daily existence this all-too-obvious element of strain and confusion? It is clear that we can never return to the extreme simplicity of Puritan days. For that matter we can never return to the relative simplicity of the 1890s. Life is now organized on a new basis, and we must make up our minds to accept not only a great deal of its elaborate paraphernalia but also the element of strain this paraphernalia invariably brings. There was a time when a man could get along without a telephone. Abraham Lincoln lived a fairly busy life and ran a fairly important war without ever seeing one. But as life is organized to-day, a telephone is part of our necessary equipment. It may rouse us out of bed at midnight when someone dials the wrong number, or

it may call us imperiously from our private devotions. But annoyance though it is, we must have it near at hand. There was a time when the average person could do his work without the help of an automobile. Some of us who still count ourselves young (or at least not so old) recall the pre-automobile days vividly and we have the feeling they were distinctly enjoyable. But as life is now organized the automobile, like the telephone, is a necessity. How necessary it is we realize when the car breaks down, and we are compelled to take to our feet or beg rides from the neighbors. When we speak of keeping life reasonably simple we have no notion of advising a return to Puritan days or even to the world of the 1890s. What we do propose is to inquire how we can stay in our modern world and then simplify our way of living until existence becomes somewhat less exhausting. If you study the people about you you will soon realize that a few of them have learned this secret and developed this technique. What are their methods of keeping life simple?

III

To begin with, some people succeed in keeping life simple by resolutely saying "No!" to many of

the demands made upon them. These individuals make no pretense of doing all the things they are advised to do, or bearing all the burdens they are urged to assume. They deliberately restrict their undertakings and responsibilities, and by so doing keep their life (and their nerves) from becoming unmanageable. Why are the demands made upon us to-day so numerous? We have seen in recent years three highly significant developments—the emergence of modern advertising, modern salesmanship, and modern methods of personal coercion. No intelligent person would condemn all three indiscriminately. Each one has its distinct value. Modern advertising makes possible a large sale of goods, and that in turn makes possible quantity-production and a low per-unit cost. Modern salesmanship keeps our vast economic machine in operation. Manufacturers could never run their plants steadily if the goods produced in a never-ending stream were not kept moving by an efficient sales-organization. Modern methods of personal coercion repeatedly solve problems that are of the utmost importance for institutions. They enable us, for example, to force the one man in a community who can organize a money-raising campaign to do so, often against his expecta-

tion and almost invariably against his desire. All of us recognize the value of these modern devices, and all of us occasionally make use of them.

But consider the problems the advertisers, the salesmen, and the experts in personal coercion force upon us. Day by day the advertisers insist that we shall never be happy until we buy a more expensive car, or assert that our home will be a dreary place until it is transformed by a new radio. The salesmen urge us to purchase this and subscribe to that, insisting that the payments can be spread over such a long period of time that we will never realize we are paying for the new luxury until the final payment is made. Modern methods of coercion? How many of us find ourselves manœuvered into this job and that responsibility without realizing what is going on, and without having—once the machinery is started—the chance to make an effectual protest! In such a world who questions our need for stubbornness, an unfaltering ability to say "No"? Without such an ability we face the inevitable prospect of an over-driven and an under-regulated life.

If a person makes it a practice to refuse demands, will he not incur criticism? Of course he will. But

experience has shown that there are some things far worse than criticism. One is buying everything we are urged to buy, and then remaining in debt for years while the bills are being paid. Another is making pledges, and then failing to pay them. Another is accepting too many responsibilities, and then exhausting one's self trying to carry them all. How many people there are who, struggling under a burden of physical weariness and spiritual depression, could speedily bring the radiance back into life if they would pluck up courage to simplify their way of living even at the cost of criticism! Years ago a Man who was an expert in solving life's problems said to His friends, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." Most people think that Jesus was protesting against the materialistic view of life. His thought almost certainly went deeper. The full meaning of those familiar words is probably this. "A man's true life does not grow out of the multitude of objects in his home, or the throng of undertakings in which he is engaged." The real sources of happiness and nobility of life lie elsewhere. How bitterly we all need Jesus' perspective in our tense, over-ambitious world!

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last—dry, bald, and sere.
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May.
Although it fall and die that night
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be.[1]

IV

Other people have a different way of keeping life simple. These men and women make it a rule never to set up a machine which may eventually prove too cumbersome for them to run. It is safe to say that half the strain could be taken out of life to-day if this rule were followed universally. Here, for instance, is a young minister whose efforts have been notably successful. His church has increased in membership at a phenomenal rate, and now the edifice is crowded every Sunday. Presently the minister, spurred on by a small group of admirers, announces an impressive program of expansion. The people in his church are to raise half a million dollars and build a plant that will be the envy and the admira-

[1] Ben Jonson.

tion of everyone. A large auditorium, an up-to-date Sunday school building, a complete equipment for community work—how splendid the new edifices will be! Finally, and not without a certain difficulty, the funds are pledged and the buildings are completed. But within a few weeks a wholly unexpected problem emerges. The cost of maintaining the new plant proves heavier than anyone expected. The elaborate program of week day activities will not, it is discovered, run itself. Presently everyone senses the fact that the major task of the new church will be to keep itself in operation and secure—somehow or other—enough money to pay the bills. Religious interests and plans for community service slip into the background, while the problem of raising the annual budget occupies more and more distinctly the center of attention. Money-raising schemes of all sorts are devised and put into operation, and no occasion goes by without seeing collection plates passed and pledge cards distributed. A certain group of former enthusiasts, now wearied by a religion in which literally nothing is without money and without price, slip away to other churches or abandon organized religion entirely. This means, of course, that new members must be found to take their place.

Without these new members a serious financial crisis will speedily develop. Recruiting projects of all sorts are then tried, and bands of roving prospect-hunters scour the community in the effort to drive from cover any unchurched individual. Is this an imaginary picture? Would that it were! The truth is situations of this type can be found in almost every large city in the United States. Scores of ministers are literally wearing themselves out in the effort to keep the wheels of an over-enlarged ecclesiastical machine in motion. Scores of churches are literally dying within their own too expensive edifice.

This blunder, obvious in the case of ministers and social workers, is often overlooked in the case of business and professional men. We witness to-day the lamentable spectacle of hundreds of young couples setting up for themselves a domestic and social mechanism which in the years ahead will almost certainly prove too complicated for them to run. When the average man accumulates wealth what is his first thought? To build a new and much larger house, to initiate a campaign for wider social recognition, and to set up a more impressive and luxurious standard of living. At first the new situa-

tion seems delightful. But before many years the burden of keeping the immense mechanism in operation proves staggering. The budget of the family doubles and trebles, showing no inclination whatever to become stabilized on a reasonable level. Worse still, the children's demands become more and more extensive. When the children marry are they willing to drop back to the simple standard of living which the parents knew in their pre-affluent days? Certainly not! As a matter of fact the children cannot drop back to that standard of living. They know only one way in which to live—the expensive way. When they marry, their own slender earnings must be supplemented by a generous allowance from home. Eventually the energy of all the members of the family, young and old, is devoted to the task of keeping up appearances, making the cumbersome wheels of this over-elaborate domestic mechanism stay in motion. How much wiser, when the opportunity to change our way of living comes, to limit our ambitions and control our extravagance! How much better to set up only that amount of machinery which we can run without a sense of strain!

V

A third group of people finds still another way of keeping life simple. These individuals make it a practice to find their satisfactions inside their daily work rather than outside. Unfortunately most people fail to learn this secret of a happy and a well-organized life. Most people fall into the habit of counting their daily work drudgery. They feel that good times begin only when their job is done, or when it can be forgotten for a few hours. What is the effect of this inner attitude? Instantly it doubles the strain and the burden of life. All of us want enjoyment, and if we cannot learn to find enjoyment during working hours we inevitably seek enjoyment after work is done. This is the attitude and the practise of thousands of overtired young people to-day. They work by day at an occupation they count dull and uninteresting, and then they work even harder after hours trying to give themselves a good time or trying to earn the money to buy a good time. Thus they carry a double set of burdens and a double set of problems. Suppose, by changing their attitude, they could make their work provide their much-desired happiness. What would happen? Half the

burdens would drop from their shoulders, and half the problems would fade from their mind. Instead of being hopelessly complicated life would begin to seem reasonably simple. As long as a man carries his job in one bundle and his happiness in another, he will inevitably tug two burdens along the road of life. As soon as he learns to pack his job and his happiness in the same bundle, he will have only one burden to carry and life's journey will be proportionately easier.

Is it possible to find happiness inside our work rather than outside? The best way to answer that question is to point to the actual experience of some of our contemporaries. Where did Thomas A. Edison find his happiness? He spent ten years working on his storage battery. Day after day he was at his laboratory at seven-thirty in the morning. Repeatedly he had his lunch sent to him there so that he would not lose time from his work. Often he went back to the laboratory in the evening to face his problems again in quiet and solitude. That for ten years! After the battery had finally been perfected someone asked why he had worked so long and so hard. Edison replied, "I never worked a day in my life. It was all play." There spoke a man who

had learned to find happiness within his daily work. Equally impressive is the record of Dr. Michelson of California, the first American to win the Nobel Prize for achievement in science. After years of the most painstaking study he succeeded in measuring with unprecedented accuracy the speed of light. When he reached his seventy-fourth birthday his friends thought he would retire from scientific work and enjoy himself in conventional fashion. But nothing of the kind happened. To everyone's surprise he announced that he intended to tackle his problem again and find ways of measuring still more accurately how fast light travels. One day a friend approached him and asked bluntly, "Why are you working so hard to discover the velocity of light?" Dr. Michelson's eyes twinkled and he replied, "If you really want to know, it is because the job is so much fun." Another man who learned to carry one bundle rather than two, and who as a result found life's journey a constant delight.

VI

There is one other way by which people solve this problem of simplifying life. It represents an entirely different approach to the problem and an entirely different way of grappling with it. Many people,

realizing there is literally no way by which they can make their burdens fewer or lighter, find ways to make their own strength greater. The ultimate result is of course the same. In each case the burden that once seemed impossibly heavy is now carried with ease. Some of us, studying our own situation carefully, have come to the conclusion that there is no way by which our load can be made lighter. There are certain tasks which, hard and exhausting though they are, must be performed. There is a certain amount of money which, after all the economies have been carried through, must be earned. There are certain responsibilities which no one else can carry for us. In this situation we have been forced to turn our efforts from the world without to the world within. We have been compelled to discover ways by which our own inner strength can be increased. As we have faced this problem what is the secret we have learned? It is the secret of resting between successive tasks—resting for a moment and resting right where we are. Again and again we find that this practice unlocks within our own life unguessed resources of poise, strength, and endurance. When life refuses to be simplified, this way of meeting life has enabled us to manage its demands.

How does one learn to rest between tasks? The

next time your day seems hopelessly crowded and exhausting, deliberately lay aside your burdens for five minutes or even one. Close your eyes, relax your tense muscles, push your problems out of the bright circle of your attention. Then withdraw into the unruffled silence of the inner world. As the quietness there steals over your spirit remind yourself that you are not doing all the work alone. God is working on those problems too. After all, He is just as much concerned in their solution as you are. He was busy long before you appeared. He will still be at work long after you are gone. Think about Him, and then rest quietly in His power, His wisdom, His unfaltering care. You will find His strength flowing into your spirit, His peace descending on your tired heart.

When spurred by tasks unceasing or undone
You would seek rest afar
And cannot, though the rest be fairly won,
Rest where you are.
Not in event, restriction, or release,
In journeys near or far,
But in the heart lies restlessness or peace,
Rest where you are.[2]

[2] Charles P. Cleaves.

CHAPTER VIII

TAKING CRITICISM IN THE RIGHT WAY

I

A few years ago one of the most influential statesmen of our generation died in Russia. His name was Nikolai Lenin, and he will go down in history as one of the men who destroyed the old Russia and built the new. Two days after his death the *New York American* paid him this extraordinary tribute. "History will call Lenin a man remarkable and great—great in power, in personality, in extraordinary success. He will stand out in the world's records when to-day's pygmies (who think themselves giants) will be forgotten." Meantime, one of the Russian archbishops was paying his tribute to Lenin's religious interests. In a newspaper interview he declared, "Speaking for myself, I consider Lenin not only a Christian but a very tender one."

But were all the comments on the dead man so favorable? It is curious to find that at the very time one group was praising Lenin another group was

denouncing him bitterly. The *New York Tribune* declared, "Lenin's program was one of revenge and destruction. He will take his place among the great wreckers of history." The *New York Evening Post* was even more vigorous in its denunciation. Its editorial read, "Lenin has come to the very eminence of infamy. He was the Judas of the real Russian Revolution. His name is a byword and a hissing. He will be remembered as Attila and Alaric are remembered. He was another Scourge of God."

These curiously divergent comments disclose one of the significant facts about life. All of us are sure to meet at least some criticism. No matter how loudly our friends may praise our achievements, and no matter how sure our admirers may be that we are "very tender Christians," our critics and our enemies are sure to berate us roundly. There is an old Latin proverb, "Not even Jupiter can please everybody." Sooner or later we lesser mortals repeat Jupiter's embarrassing experience. If our position in the community and the type of work we do keep us out of the public eye we usually escape with a small amount of abuse. But if we happen to occupy a position of prominence we are certain to encounter extensive hostility. The experience of successive

Presidents of the United States is highly suggestive. Here is the comment passed on one. "The occupant of the Presidency is little better than a murderer. He is treacherous in private friendships, a hypocrite in public life, an imposter who has either abandoned all good principles or else never had any." With love for George Washington! Or listen again. "The President is a monster whose choicest ailment is human blood." Kind regards for Andrew Jackson! But these abusive sentences, uttered by one who was later given a Cabinet position by the very man he denounced, are the most incredible of all. "The President is a low, cunning clown. He is the original gorilla. Those who seek the ape-man are fools to travel all the way to Africa when what they are after can be so readily located in Springfield, Illinois." Who was that critic talking about? Abraham Lincoln.

One of the lessons all of us must learn is how to meet this inevitable criticism. Unfortunately many people never give the matter serious attention, and go through life without mastering this art. Some individuals, for example, promptly lose their temper when they are criticized. It makes little difference whether the criticism is justified or not. At the first

evidence of unfavorable comment these individuals fly into a passion. Michelangelo seems to have been a man of this type. He was once commissioned to paint a picture for the Pope's private chapel. With a singular lack of taste he included in the picture several nude figures. The Pope's master of ceremonies, who had to pass judgment on the picture, very rightly objected to it. Michelangelo lost his temper, berated the master of ceremonies unmercifully, and then painted another picture in which his critic—painted in photographic likeness—appeared as a devil with horns on his head and a serpent twisted about his waist. Obviously Michelangelo had not learned how to take criticism.

Other people go to the opposite extreme, accept at its face value everything any critic says, and then try to follow the program the critic lays down for them. Whether the suggestions are wise or foolish these weak-kneed individuals hastily surrender and revise their own beliefs and programs. To this group of oversensitive and vacillating people belong the ministers who deliberately omit from their sermons every idea that might conceivably give offense, the politicians who espouse one cause one day and the opposite the next, and the young people who would

rather surrender every ideal and every moral principle than endure a little good-natured ridicule. One attack, and these cowards run up the white flag. How can you and I avoid these two extremes? What should be our attitude toward comment and criticism?

II

To begin with, we should remember that a great deal of criticism is worthless and should be entirely ignored. The criticisms that grow out of ignorance belong in this class. We always have the right to demand that our critics show their credentials, and if our critics have no credentials we can promptly and quietly disregard what they say. If a great violinist were distressed by the comments of an ignorant peasant, we would call the violinist over-sensitive. We would tell him the only criticisms he ought to consider seriously are those given by the people who knew something about violin music and the technique of violin playing. Why do we so often forget this simple and obvious principle ourselves? A minister has every right to disregard the strictures of the men and women who know nothing about churches, nothing about religion, and nothing about the problems of preaching. A business man should pass over in

silence the remarks of the individuals—educated or otherwise—who know nothing about the actual problems he and his concern are facing. Parents are sometimes compelled to listen to long orations on child-training given by excited spinsters and bachelors, but they are certainly under no obligation to take seriously the advice and commands thus offered them.

During his term in the White House President Garfield once made a speaking trip through rural Ohio. He addressed crowds of farmers at successive country fairs, and tried to explain to them his problems and his policies. His son accompanied him on the trip, and one day the boy launched into an unexpected indictment of his father's methods of public address. The boy said, "Why do you repeat yourself so often? To-day you said the same thing four times, and you actually used the same words each time. I get awfully uncomfortable when you make such blunders." Mr. Garfield smiled quietly and then said, "Did you think your father was running out of ideas? I guess you don't know much about the problem of talking to farmers on a hot day at a country fair. When I reach that place in my speech to-morrow watch the crowd. The first time I make

my point the people near the platform will get it. But further back in the crowd there will still be a certain amount of confusion as late-comers try to find places. The second time I make the point the group in the middle of the crowd will get it. On the third try I'll make converts on the very edge of the crowd. But long experience in this kind of work has shown me that it takes at least four shots to bag every farmer at a country fair." How little that boy knew about the problems and the technique of outdoor speaking! How worthless his criticisms on that subject were!

Equally worthless are the criticisms that spring from unworthy motives. Did you never realize how many of the mean remarks we hear day after day originate in sheer jealousy? These comments tell us nothing about the man who is being criticized. They do tell a great deal about the people who do the criticizing. One night Dwight L. Moody was addressing an immense congregation. On the platform with him were several ministers from the local churches. At the close of Mr. Moody's sermon one of these men stepped forward and said coolly, "Excuse me, but you made eleven mistakes in grammar to-night." There was a moment of embarrassed

silence, and then Mr. Moody said jovially, "Probably I did. My early education was very faulty. But I am using all the grammar I know in the service of Christ. How about you?" The ultimate source of that cruel comment was obvious. It came from jealousy—the jealousy of a man who was failing in the work in which Mr. Moody was succeeding. A large proportion, perhaps a majority, of the unkind remarks that are bandied about in the modern community springs from the same discreditable source.

Or think of the people who make cruel comments on their neighbors in order to gain attention and win a reputation for cleverness. Thackeray wrote, after long observation and experience, "A mutual acquaintance grilled, deviled, and served with mustard and cayenne excites the appetite. But a slice of cold friend served with jelly is a sickly, unrelishing meal." What a picture of the people, old as well as young, who denounce the local minister, the local doctor and the local school teacher, and then listen hopefully for laughter and applause! Criticism of this cheap and insincere type should be entirely disregarded. It is as worthless as the indictments growing out of jealousy, or the advice rooted in ignorance.

What is the criticism we ought to take seriously? It is the criticism which comes from those who understand us and our work, who know what problems we face and what progress we are making, and whose aim in offering criticism is to help us work more effectively. For criticism of this type we can never be too grateful. If we do not get all of it we need we have every right to ask for it. The best friends we have are those who tell us kindly and intelligently but relentlessly where we fail and how we can do better. Their comments and suggestions are of priceless value. To disregard the advice of these friends in the same way in which we disregard the criticisms of the ignorant, the jealous, and the insincere is to make a lamentable blunder.

III

When we thus receive the right type of criticism we must school ourselves to listen to it with a quiet and a receptive mind. Whether it cuts deep makes no difference. We must listen, and try to profit by what is said. It is at this point that so many people fail pitifully. Some of them, criticized fairly and kindly, instantly jump to their own defense. With an obvious show of resentment they insist that the

critic is entirely wrong, and that they themselves are entirely right. Naturally individuals of this type never gain from criticism the help they should. The words that might disclose to them better ways of working or thinking merely dig deeper the existing ruts of their prejudice. One of my classmates in college once gave a singularly vivid description of his father. "My father's idea of a discussion," he said, "is a passionate expression of his own opinion." How little that father knew about the art of taking criticism!

Other people, hearing the kindly and intelligent suggestions of their friends, instantly begin to whine. "So you too have turned against me!" they exclaim. "I might have expected it from some one else, but never from you." Then follows either a flood of tears or a day of grouchiness, depending on the temperament of the individual concerned. Unfortunately this seems to be the procedure in many homes when the husband ventures to criticize his wife, or when she plucks up courage to make a few kindly suggestions to him. In these families long and unhappy experience has shown that it is wiser to endure irritating situations than to make an apparently safe effort to correct them.

Still other people, meeting criticism that is undoubtedly fair, react in another way. They develop, suddenly or gradually, an intense personal resentment toward the one who dared criticize them. Sometimes this resentment flares out in an immediate explosion of anger. More often it is concealed and reveals itself months or even years later in half-disguised form. Here lies the explanation of the cooling of many old friendships, the apparently inexplicable antagonisms found in many families, and the utterly irrational bitterness which some people display toward certain individuals in their acquaintance. Behind these strange actions we can usually find, if we look long enough, an intense personal resentment growing out of a criticism which was made years before and which was unfortunately taken in the wrong way.

Suppose a man does listen quietly and receptively to the criticisms that can help him. What will he learn from them? For one thing he will discover what his mannerisms are. All of us develop mannerisms, but few of us realize that the process is going on and still fewer recognize its results. The reason is that we are so close to our mannerisms that they, like bits of dirt on our nose, escape our

view. Only when a mirror is obligingly held before us do we appreciate the situation. Ministers drift into a dozen quaint habits, as many of us can testify. We find ourselves leaning on the pulpit, or thrusting our hands into our pockets, or repeating a few catch-phrases and well-worn ideas until the members of the congregation cringe when they see signs of what is coming. But our parishioners develop mannerisms too, mannerisms which are as familiar to the minister as his are to the parishioners. We ministers find business men following a sacrosanct office ritual, or defending strange and antiquated convictions about economics, politics, and (curiously enough) theology. We discover that many doctors make it a practice to discuss diseases at the dinner table, often to the distress of their guests. And the feminine half of the church? Years ago George Eliot wrote, "There are some people whose celestial intimacies do not improve their daily manners." What a blessing if these pious but crotchetty individuals could see themselves clearly, and then obliterate the mannerisms which make life so hard for the other members of the family!

Sometimes the criticisms of our friends give us even greater help. These comments and suggestions

open before us new vistas of achievement, stimulate us to new and more effective endeavor, and push us forward on new and more direct roads to success. All of us, however well-meaning and hard-working, fall into ruts and wander off on detours. Is there anything half so likely to lift us out of our rut and lead us back to the highway as the frank criticism of those who love us and are interested in our journey? Some years ago a young Chinese student enrolled in the International Y. M. C. A. College in Springfield. He was desperately poor, and he conceived the idea of earning a little extra money by writing and selling sketches of his boyhood days in China. One day he brought the sketches to me, but as I read their quaint phrases and curious grammatical constructions my heart sank. Was there the slightest chance any publisher would purchase them? We mailed them to the editor of a New England magazine, and the next week his prompt letter of rejection reached me. I hardly dared show it to that Chinese student. Would the criticism not break his heart? But here is the brave reply he sent me after reading that letter. "This criticism from the editor is indeed very helpful to me. I shall do my best to improve what is lacking. In fact this experience will

open many hitherto locked doors for my thought-life. It may mean a bit of emotional unpleasantness at first, but it shall be a light for the future works I might produce. Yes, I shall rewrite the whole thing. Not the immediate success, but something worth-while I am mostly hoping to bring forth; may it cost labor and time and pain." That Chinese boy may not have mastered English grammar. But he had mastered something even more important—the art of taking criticism in the right way.

IV

But there is one more thing that must be said. In every man's life there come occasional moments when he must make his own decisions and then resolutely abide by them, regardless of comments and criticism. Until we develop this capacity for heroic self-direction and endurance life's lesson is only half learned. Experience has shown repeatedly that there are a few situations in which each of us must determine what seems to him wise and right, and then—no matter if some of his friends shake their heads and the others laugh in derision—stand by his colors.

One such occasion arises when a man chooses his own life-work. No matter what career he elects

some of his friends will be convinced he is making a mistake, and will show little hesitation in saying so. He may well listen to them while his decision is taking shape, but once the decision is made he must assume a new attitude and count the question permanently settled. If he is forever reconsidering the evidence, asking for more advice, and making tentative ventures in other lines, he condemns himself to a life of ineffectiveness and forfeits the respect of every courageous individual. A similar situation develops, of course, when we approach marriage. The choice we make at that time never satisfies all our friends. Some of them will always feel—no matter whom we marry—that we made a tragic mistake. Others will discuss for years what might have happened had we married the person they picked for us. We may well listen for a time to the counsel of those we love and trust, but a day comes when we must deal with the situation in an entirely different way. We must face our problem, solve it in our own way, stand by our decision no matter what happens, and insist that the question is never to be reopened either by our friends or by ourselves. Here, as in so many places, the path of life suddenly narrows and we must walk it for a moment quite alone. How dif-

ferent the story of many homes would have been had the husband and the wife recognized this truth, made their decision, and then resolutely disregarded the suggestions and the interference of outsiders!

In the case of our major moral decisions the same principle holds true. When you and I are trying to make up our minds what is right we ought by all means to get what light we can from others. But a moment finally comes when we must make our own decision and determine for ourselves where the path of duty lies. We may prove to be in the minority, but our obligation is crystal clear. We must stand by the course of action we are convinced is right. If we weaken and wobble, hesitate and run for cover, we earn the contempt of every true soldier.

> They are slaves who fear to speak
> For the fallen and the weak;
> They are slaves who will not choose
> Hatred, scoffing, and abuse
> Rather than in silence shrink
> From the truth they needs must think;
> They are slaves who dare not be
> In the right with two or three! [1]

All this has a special meaning for the young people

[1] James Russell Lowell.

in our churches to-day. It is an open secret that the spirit of defiant courage has almost vanished from the Christianity of our time. Dean Inge of London says we Christians are "a group of little, harmless people, with everybody wanting a good time." That may be an exaggeration, but this much is sure. It would be a hard task recruiting martyrs in the modern church. All of us have convictions and standards of conduct, but the moment our neighbors begin to twit us about them or apply to us the fatal epithet "Puritan!" most of us make haste to pull down our flag and capitulate. If this tendency continues Christianity will face a future of dwindling influence and ever-declining prestige. The novel and the newspaper will be more potent social forces than the church.

What are the situations in which we Christians ought to take a definite stand and then stick to it, regardless of misunderstanding, ridicule, and abuse? We certainly ought to take a stand for decency of thought, speech, and action. How long would dirty books be published and tawdry plays produced if the people who bear the name of Christ would have nothing to do with them? How long would vulgarity flourish in school and college communities if the boys

and girls who count themselves Christians would turn bravely against it? When we see clearly what we ought to do, but then permit ourselves to be laughed away from our duty or jeered out of our convictions, we are sorry representatives of a Man who went to the cross rather than surrender His ideals.

The time has also come when we Christians ought to take a stand for the church and the cause it represents. We see to-day the passing of a generation that loved the church, believed in it, and was ready to make any sacrifice in its behalf. The churches of to-day are largely the creation of that generation. Now we find a new generation supplanting the old, a new generation which seems to lack the sense of institutional loyalty. As this change goes on, great numbers of young people drift out of the church and make no pretense of giving it even a fraction of the old interest and the old devotion. What this means for the churches and the Christian institutions of fifty years hence, or even twenty years hence, no one knows. But one thing is sure. The Christians of our time who let themselves be invited away from the church, or who permit their children to be lured away from the church, are sorry successors of those

Christians who, only a few generations ago, were ready to die for the church. What right have we to the name of Christ if there is literally no cause, no ideal, or no institution for which we are ready to face ridicule, hardship, and pain? "If any man would come after me let him take up his cross. . . ." That command has never been repealed. It has a solemn meaning for our soft and self-indulgent generation.

CHAPTER IX

GETTING ALONG WITH OTHER PEOPLE

I

ONE of the professors at the School of Education at Harvard has recently attempted an interesting investigation. He secured the records of nearly 4400 men who had been discharged from industrial establishments and tried to determine the ultimate cause of their difficulty. Why was it they had lost their jobs? To his surprise he found that their main defect was not lack of technical knowledge. Neither was it lack of skill in actual performance. The chief source of difficulty was what he calls "a failure in human relationships and character-qualities." In simpler language, most of these men—62 per cent of the total—had been discharged because they could not get along with other people. That weakness, the inability to manage personal contacts, finally proved fatal.

At first glance these figures seem exaggerated.

How can our ability to get along with other people have any such significance? But if you think carefully you will realize that these figures probably do tell the truth. Consider the people in your own acquaintance who are failing. There is that young business man who is constantly shifting from one concern to another, apparently unable to hold a position for more than a few months. What is the root of his trouble? A fatal inability to get along with his superiors. There is that minister who has a curious record of short pastorates. What is the difficulty? He inevitably irritates and alienates his parishioners. There are the two married people whose home is on the verge of a break-up. Why the domestic tragedy? Because neither husband nor wife can solve those problems of personal adjustment which marriage inevitably brings. Learning to get along with other people may seem an insignificant subject to discuss. As a matter of fact it is one of the most important topics imaginable. Time and again this quality of character determines our success or our failure, our daily happiness or our daily misery.

The indications are that this quality will become more rather than less important in the coming years. Obviously the success of marriage will always depend

largely on the ability of the two people involved to make adequate adjustments to each other and to their children. How can they hope to stay together and keep life happy if they know nothing of this art? How can they hope to be on good terms with their own boys and girls if they persistently fail in human contacts and personal relationships? But meantime the demands of business and professional careers grow steadily more exacting on this point. Consider the new situation in the mercantile world. Fifty years ago most of the trading in the American city was done through a multitude of small stores and insignificant shops. Each was owned and managed by an independent proprietor who was assisted by one or two clerks and an errand boy. To-day that system of trade has vanished. In place of the little shop we see an impressive department store, or a unit in a system of chain-stores which spreads from Maine to California. In this new situation the man who has never learned to do team-work cannot hope to succeed. He belongs to the era of 1880, and life has perversely thrust him into the world of 1930. Even the professions in which the individual still counts for most—medicine and the ministry—lay an increasing emphasis on the importance of personal

contacts. The young doctor who is temperamentally unable to keep on good terms with his patients and his professional associates begins his career with an almost hopeless handicap. In the intense competition of to-day he will inevitably drop behind the doctor who has a more genial personality and a greater ability to make and keep friends. The young minister who lacks the ability to build an effective church staff and persuade volunteer helpers to assist him faces a dismal professional future. He may be called to a small rural parish, but a city church beset with problems of organization and successful leadership will never cast even a glance in his direction. The younger generation even more than the older must learn this lesson of getting along with other people. Unless the lesson is learned, our boys and girls face the unhappy prospect of finding themselves bewildered and chagrined failures.

II

As we undertake this discipline there are two preliminary facts we shall do well to remember. One is that personal contacts are inevitably accompanied by a certain amount of superficial friction. Most parents discover this fact while their children are very young.

The boys and girls have hours of nervous and physical exhaustion, hours in which they say and do foolish things which must be quietly overlooked and never recalled. To regard the outbursts of a tired youngster as serious and significant is to make a lamentable blunder. Deep in his heart the little boy still loves us, though from his words and actions no outsider (unless he too has children) would guess it. We must overlook tired nerves, disappointed expectations, and the outburst of temper they create. We must wait patiently for the child's real self to reëmerge.

Conflicts of this superficial type also appear in every club, in every business office, and in every organization—churches included. Grown-ups as well as youngsters have their off-days, and adults as well as children occasionally stage outbursts for which they are later heartily ashamed. The first step in the art of managing personal relationships is to distinguish between superficial and serious conflicts, and to disregard the first completely. Consider, for example, the domestic situation implied in this amusing sonnet by Edna St. Vincent Millay. A young woman who is interested in literature has made the mistake of showing one of her books to her unappreciative hus-

band. He has laughed at the volume, and now she has lost her temper.

O, O you will be sorry for that word!
  Give back my book, and take my kiss instead!
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard:
  "What a big book for such a little head!"
Come, I will show you now my newest hat,
  And you may watch me purse my mouth and prink,
O I shall love you still and all of that,
  I never again shall tell you what I think!
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly,
  You will not catch me reading any more,
I shall be called a wife to pattern by. . . .
  But some day when you knock and push the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,
  I shall be gone—and you may whistle for me!

What is the best way to handle such a situation? Probably to say nothing. Whistling would certainly be fatal.

We must also expect, as we work with other people, a certain amount of more serious opposition. No one succeeds in pleasing everybody. No matter how hard we try to be agreeable, and no matter how willing we are to take suggestions, there will always be a few individuals who will not enthuse over us and our achievements. Some of these hostile people

are men and women who do not understand what we are trying to do. Ignorance lies at the bottom of their antipathy, and sometimes that ignorance can never be dispelled. The people who are jealous of us also tend to be permanently hostile. The young business man who supplants an older rival may make a dozen sincere efforts to show considerateness and establish friendly personal relations. But unless the older man has an extraordinarily fine self-control the situation remains uncomfortable. Can anything be done to correct it? Probably not. Most curious of all, the people whose temperament is radically different from ours are apt to be permanently hostile. A mother-in-law may try to be affectionate, and a daughter-in-law may try to be appreciative, but if one thinks in terms of an immaculate kitchen floor and the other in terms of Japanese prints there will probably be an irreconcilable conflict between the two. Anyone who studies life carefully and approaches its problems intelligently recognizes difficulties like these. He does not expect to please everyone, and he abandons the attempt to do so. When inevitable frictions develop he remains inwardly undisturbed. Jesus did not succeed in getting on with everyone. You and I will hardly improve on His record.

But even if no one of us can solve this problem completely, all of us can—if we will—solve it in part. We can eliminate from our lives the habits and attitudes which produce needless friction between ourselves and those about us. No one pretends that this is an easy discipline. As a matter of fact it is one of the hardest tasks to which any man can address himself. It means that he must drop his ingenious self-justifications, study his own personality with brutal frankness, and then patiently weed out of his life whatever unfortunate traits he finds growing there. Most people are genuinely interested when someone describes the way by which we can thus make ourselves more agreeable to others. Whether most people have the heroism to apply such a discussion to themselves is another story.

III

If you want to handle your human contacts more successfully you might well begin by showing people that you are quite as willing to take advice as you are to give it. All of us, ministers and parents in particular, greatly enjoy telling those about us what they ought to do and what attitudes they ought to assume. Listening quietly and receptively when our parishioners and our children reverse the rôles and

offer us advice is an entirely different matter. Have you ever noticed what strange things some people do when kind and intelligent suggestions are offered them? Some people instantly hit back at their critic, whether he happens to be the minister or the senior deacon, their father or their son. What right has he to offer this advice? And what stupid advice it is, too! Martin Luther, who certainly gave other people many suggestions, once received some from a critic. How did he take them? He wrote angrily, "Never have I seen a more ignorant ass than you are, though you boast you have studied dialectics for many years. I greatly rejoice to be condemned by so obscure a head!" Was that reply likely to improve personal relationships?

Other people, realizing that such outbursts of temper are now bad form, sit quietly while the advice is being given and then go out to do exactly what they had intended to do all the time. All of us have encountered people with this hopeless self-assurance, this unshaken and unshakable cocksureness. Unfortunately many young people assume this attitude when they leave school and begin their business or professional career. The familiar complaint of employers that the young college graduate "knows it

all" undoubtedly has some basis. The common remark that some young preachers know more to-day than they will ever know again is not without foundation. And how many older people there are who give the impression that they would be quite able to run the universe, or even devise a more satisfactory universe than this, if they were only given the chance!

What is the effect these attitudes have on the people about us? Invariably they rouse intense hostility. One of the quickest and surest ways for us to make needless enemies and create unnecessary bitterness is to give advice to other people and then persistently refuse to take advice ourselves. If you have the habit of losing your temper when suggestions are offered, or if I have the secret conviction that no one can tell me anything about preaching and writing, then you and I need look no further for the cause of our difficulties in dealing with people. There the cause is—an attitude of superiority which other people instantly feel and which makes our presence almost intolerable.

Here is a second suggestion, and one which probably applies to everyone. Whenever you find yourself differing from someone else and moving rapidly

toward a sharp conflict, force yourself to look at the disputed situation from the other person's point of view. What are the facts as the other person sees them? What are the policies which he recommends? This ability to look at life through the other man's eyes, this quality of sympathetic imagination, repeatedly enables the person who possesses it to avert misunderstandings, dodge quarrels, and gradually turn enemies into admirers. Most of the quarrels between parents and children could be obviated if the parents would develop more of this quality. As long as the father and mother can see a given situation only through their own eyes, and as long as the youngsters can see that situation only through theirs, violent disagreements are sure to ensue. But if the parents gain the power to see the facts as the children see them, as well as see the facts as those facts look to older minds, then the clash between the two generations can be either entirely obviated or at least greatly modified. Consider these fragments of conversation heard in three modern homes and reported in a current treatise on the problems of parents. In the first case a mother is speaking. "One day when I was dressing my three-year-old son I lapsed into sentimentality and murmured to him,

'Dear little lamb!' He glared at me and then shot back, 'Don't call me lamb! Call me tiger!' " What quality did that mother need if she wanted to get on with her boy? The second instance gives the remark of a boy some years older. He says disconsolately, "You can't be happy when you're being loved all the time!" Fill out the details in that picture, and then ask what quality his parents might well develop if they wanted to improve the human contacts in their home. In the third case we have the words of a High School student who has utterly lost patience with his mother. "I just can't do my work even if my door is locked," he exclaims angrily. "I know she's always sitting out there thinking about me." Three different homes—and yet the same change would solve the problem in each. A greater sympathetic imagination on the part of the parents would show them that the three-year-old wanted to be a tiger rather than a lamb, that the twelve-year-old wanted to be delivered from insistent affection, and that the sixteen-year-old wanted to be left gloriously alone.

You have difficulty getting along with other people? Ask yourself frankly if this is the root of your trouble. You write a sharp letter, and then fail

to read it the second time in order to see how it will sound to the person who receives it. You devise a scheme of discipline, and then fail to ask how it will appear to the individual who is being disciplined. You indulge in mannerisms which seem to you wholly innocent—such as the habit of making sarcastic remarks, or easing your own pain by making someone else suffer too. Have you ever looked at those mannerisms through the eyes of the people who must endure them day after day? If we have the courage to ask ourselves such questions, and the heroism to make the changes the answers inevitably suggest, we can save ourselves an immense amount of needless misunderstanding and unnecessary antagonism.

The third suggestion is equally simple and equally practical. Teach yourself to control the feeling of anger the moment you find it rising in your heart. All of us have sudden outbursts of temper and vindictiveness. How could the situation be otherwise? We are the descendants of animals that lived by fighting, that learned by long experience the importance of striking first and striking hard. The pugnacious instinct was bred deep into our nature by the centuries of jungle life through which our far off ancestors passed. The difference between people to-day does

not lie in the fact that one person has a temper while the other has not. Everyone has a temper. The difference between people is that one person learns to manage his temper while the other lets his temper manage him. What is the secret of this self-mastery? Jesus discovered it centuries ago. Jesus noticed that a man can control any one of his impulsive actions if he masters it in its initial stage. For a moment that impulsive action is only a thought and a desire, and while it is in this seed stage it can be controlled with relative ease. The anger that eventuates in murder begins as a desire in the mind. The lust that grows into adultery starts as an impure fancy. The vindictiveness that finally creates a permanent feud begins as a momentary impulse—the impulse to get even. While these evil forces are in their incipient stage they can easily be brought under control. Once grown to full strength they are almost invincible. Here is the profound wisdom that lies behind Jesus' familiar words about the control of thoughts and feelings as well as outward acts. If the thoughts and feelings are mastered, the outward acts, Jesus realized, would never come into being at all.

What is the most effective way to control the first throb of anger? We can often master that feeling

by making ourselves laugh—laugh at the situation which we are about to take so seriously. This is one reason why the individuals who have a sense of humor get through life easily and accumulate friends all along the road. Their capacity for laughter enables them to throw off those feelings of anger and resentment which, if uncontrolled, would speedily bring them into serious trouble. The next time someone annoys you, irritates you, hurts your feelings, or deliberately mistreats you, try managing the situation in this fashion. Laugh at yourself for being so easily offended. Laugh at the other person for showing such ignorance of the right way to deal with people. Laugh at the whole silly affair—so impressive at the moment and so insignificant seen in perspective. If you meet the annoyance with laughter what will happen? You will find your own anger dissolving, and then life will speedily reassume its normal aspect. Here was one secret of Abraham Lincoln's ability to manage difficult people and difficult situations. One hectic day during the Civil War Lincoln sent an important message to Stanton, his Secretary of War. Presently the messenger returned in obvious embarrassment. "Did you deliver my message?" Lincoln asked. "Yes." "What did Mr. Stanton reply?" The

messenger spoke reluctantly. "Mr. Stanton tore your letter up, and then said you were a fool." "Mr. Stanton called me a fool?" "Yes, sir." There was a moment of silence, and then Lincoln began to laugh. "Well, if Mr. Stanton says I'm a fool I guess I must be one. Mr. Stanton is generally right." What situation could upset a man like that?

Here is one more discipline all of us might well undertake. As we live and work with other people, let us remind ourselves constantly that deliberate and sustained kindness will finally break down almost every form of ill-will. Probably there are a few situations in which kindness, like every other spiritual power, may conceivably fail. Doubtless there are a few occasions, particularly when we are dealing with individuals who are in a thoroughly abnormal state, on which kindness must express itself through physical force. But when we have made room for these few exceptions, how clear and how familiar the rule is! The experience of the generations has shown that love is stronger than hate, and that active kindness will conquer the most stubborn will-toward-evil. If we meet anger with anger, vindictiveness with vindictiveness, cruelty with cruelty, our enemies will steel themselves to endure our thrusts and pay us back in

kind. But if we reveal the love that bears all things, endures all things, and still never fails, we shall find enmity fading and eventually changing to good will. You and I realize from our own experience that it is almost impossible to retain the feeling of bitterness toward a person who quietly and persistently helps us. Why do we think other people are built of different human material?

During one of the Armenian massacres early in the War an Armenian girl and her brother were chased by a Turkish soldier, who was determined to kill them both. He did overtake the boy, and with a swift lunge of his bayonet finished him. But the girl dodged down a side street, leaped over a wall, and escaped. Later in the War she became a nurse and was assigned to duty in a military hospital. One day the orderlies brought into her ward the Turkish soldier who had killed her brother and tried to kill her. He was desperately ill, too ill to recognize anyone. But the nurse instantly recognized him. How could she ever forget that hated face? The slightest inattention on her part would bring on that soldier's death and thus avenge the wrong he had done her in the past. What should that nurse do? The animal impulse within her heart cried "Revenge!" The Christ

to whom she had given her life whispered "Love!" Which voice should she follow? She nursed that soldier back to life, and one day when his strength had returned she saw him gazing at her in astonishment. He, too, had remembered. He beckoned her to him, and as she leaned over the bed he asked why she had saved his life. She answered quietly, "Christ told me to love my enemies." The soldier was silent for a long time, and then whispered brokenly, "I never knew there was a religion like that. I want it too." Love, the mightiest power there is. Why not use it more often?

CHAPTER X

KEEPING UP ONE'S COURAGE

I

On December 16, 1770 a boy of supreme musical genius was born in western Germany. His name was Ludwig van Beethoven, and before he was four his phenomenal talent had begun to disclose itself. He studied piano and violin with his father, and at the age of seven gave a series of concerts in the near-by city of Cologne. At ten he toured Holland, at fourteen he conducted the orchestra at an opera, and at seventeen he went to Vienna and played before Mozart. At first Mozart was unwilling to give the boy a hearing, but when Beethoven sat at the piano and began to improvise Mozart listened in astonishment. Was there anything in music beyond the reach of that gifted lad?

But during the next few years the shadow of a great tragedy began to fall across Beethoven's path. Slowly but relentlessly he lost his hearing. He consulted one doctor after another, and finally in despair hired a mechanic to build him a pair of clumsy

ear trumpets. But every effort failed. When Beethoven reached the early thirties he was almost totally deaf. People passing his house could see him bending close to his piano trying to hear his own music. One by one his masterpieces were written, but meantime the sounds of the outer world grew steadily fainter. When Beethoven's ninth symphony was finished some of his friends foolishly persuaded him to conduct the first performance. The result was tragic. Beethoven waved his baton energetically, but the audience soon realized that he heard nothing of the music. At the close of the performance someone turned Beethoven around to face the audience. Only then did he realize that people were applauding. At the age of fifty-seven Beethoven died, murmuring at the end words of indescribable pathos—"I shall hear again in heaven." What was the inner problem he had been facing for thirty long years? One of the hardest problems a man ever meets. The problem of keeping up his own courage.

Sooner or later life forces this problem on us all. Sometimes our efforts to solve it are apparent to our friends. They realize what difficulties we are facing and how valiantly we are trying to maintain our own morale. Their understanding and their words of en-

couragement are, as most of us can testify, of incalculable help. But sometimes our battle for courage goes on in secret. Life's burden suddenly becomes intolerably heavy, but no outsider senses the fact. We face our hard situation alone, and we struggle for courage without the solace of human understanding and sympathy. A few weeks ago the manager of a small factory near New York advertised for a man to do rough work in his shipping-room. The wages were pitifully small—only eighteen dollars a week if the man were single, and twenty dollars if he were married. The manager thought perhaps a dozen applicants would appear. Instead, a throng of five hundred jobless men filled the street, and the police had to be summoned to keep order. The position was given to one of the men at the head of the line, and the others were told to look elsewhere for work. Suppose we had met one of those men as he trudged wearily home. How little we would have known of his tragedy! How little we would have seen of his battle for courage!

God pity all the lonely folk
With griefs they do not tell,
Women waking in the night
And men dissembling well.

God pity all the brave who go
The common road, and wear
No ribboned medal on their breast,
No laurel in their hair.[1]

II

When circumstances thus turn against us, why is it imperative to maintain our courage? Because if we do maintain it we may succeed in turning defeat into sudden and unexpected victory. Beethoven, finding he was deaf but then writing glorious music, is only one of thousands of men who have finally astonished the world by their splendid achievement. Fate cried "Surrender!" but they doggedly refused to pull down their banners. In the end it was fate that had to acknowledge defeat.

Just a century ago a boy named Arthur Kavanagh was born in Ireland. Some accident of prenatal development sent him into the world with neither arms nor legs. He had only four little stumps instead. Everyone said that such a misshapen child would soon die, or that if he lived he would be a useless cripple all his days. But with a heroism beyond all praise the boy's parents, and later the boy himself, deliberately determined to conquer fate. The record

[1] Louise Driscoll.

of Arthur Kavanagh's sixty-eight years of achievement almost surpasses belief. At first he had to be carried from room to room on the back of a servant, but eventually he learned to make his own way about the house by a series of springs and jumps. Attachments were fitted to his shoulders, and presently he could not only write legibly but even paint creditable pictures. One day he announced his intention of learning to ride horseback. A saddle-chair was made and he was strapped securely inside. After infinite practice he learned to keep his balance on a horse, and eventually rode not only at a gallop but even jumped fences and ditches. His achievements attracted wide attention, and eventually he was appointed sheriff of Kilkenny County. His success in that position led to his election to the British Parliament in 1866, and for no less than fourteen years he represented his constituency in London. At the time of his death in 1889 one of the London periodicals referred to him as "one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived." Kavanagh certainly deserved the tribute. What was the secret of his achievement? Sheer courage. Had he surrendered to his handicap he would have lived and died in an institution, a burden to himself and a problem for his

community. As it was, he left behind a record of accomplishment which the world can never forget. Given enough courage, and even a cripple can thrust open the doors of opportunity.

What is the secret of enlarging one's courage? Some people fancy that we get courage by merely wishing for it, that we draw it at any moment and in any amount from some limitless inner supply. Nothing of the kind is true. We build up courage by long and patient self-discipline, just as we build up physical strength or intellectual power. Granted there are initial differences between individuals at this as at every point. Granted that some people are naturally brave while others are naturally timorous. On the foundation given us by inheritance we build what superstructure we choose. Some individuals create a magnificent self-confidence, resolution, and persistence. Fate may create difficulties for them, but fate can never defeat them permanently. Meantime other men and women build up only a meager strength of will. To the end of their days they remain the playthings of circumstance. Even a trivial disappointment drives them back in whimpering defeat. Suppose a man wants to gain for himself a greater courage and endurance. Suppose he is willing

to work and work hard on his self-imposed task. How should he begin his efforts?

III

For one thing, he must learn to keep his attention on the things he has, rather than on the things he has not. If you study brave people carefully you will soon discover that this is one of their significant mental habits. They continually rejoice in their assets rather than moan over their liabilities. If you study weaklings you will note that in many cases their despair goes back to the fatal habit of brooding over the satisfactions and the opportunities which they have never enjoyed. Here, as in so many situations, the difference between the outward effectiveness of individuals goes back to a difference in mental habits and spiritual attitudes.

Some months ago a young man in a distant city sent me this pitiful letter. "Something is certainly radically wrong with me. At times I get to thinking I shall never earn one of the big salaries, and then I grow indescribably despondent. I used to think that big salaries were largely a matter of luck, but now I have changed my mind. When I see what enormous

opportunities lie open in a city like this I realize that if a man has real ability he will seize one of them and speedily accumulate a fortune. The fact that I continue to earn only a small amount makes me conclude I lack ability. And it's no fun to realize you're a second-rater when you're still under forty." To read that letter you would never guess how many things this young man had to be happy about. All you see is the picture of an underpaid subordinate who is heartbroken because he is not yet a millionaire. As a matter of fact the young man's situation was far more favorable than he implied. He had the best of health, a fine education, a wide circle of friends, and an excellent position in a large corporation. There was every likelihood he would be promoted higher and higher as his turn came. Most important of all he had a singularly happy home life. His pride in his wife and his children revealed itself to anyone who talked with him for even twenty minutes. What was the cause of his despondency, his pitiful lack of courage? He had fixed his mind on the one satisfaction he had never gained—a huge salary. He habitually overlooked the many satisfactions that had been given him. Is it any wonder that a man

with such a distorted outlook found life unhappy? Is it surprising that it was increasingly difficult for him to muster courage for the day's work?

The importance of thus fixing our attention on the right set of facts was humorously and inadvertently suggested by an advertisement which recently appeared in one of our weeklies. Someone who was eager to sell health insurance worked out this curious prophecy. "If you are an average man and have never been examined for your health, there are three chances in one hundred that you have tuberculosis, ten chances in one hundred that you have a bad heart, sixty-six chances in one hundred that your eyes are defective, and eighty-five chances in one hundred that you have diseased tooth-sockets, tonsils, and nasal cavities." Such are the potential ailments of the average man. How dismal his prospects are—if he fastens his attention on the diseases that may overtake him! But suppose this same man fixes his attention on his chances for vigor and long life. Here are the same statistics arranged with an optimistic emphasis. "If you are an average man and have never been examined for your health, there are fifteen chances in one hundred that you have nothing whatever the matter with your tooth-sockets, tonsils, and

nasal cavities. There are thirty-four chances in one hundred that your eyes are in excellent condition, ninety chances in one hundred that your heart is all right, and ninety-seven chances in one hundred that you have escaped tuberculosis." When we read the statistics one way we begin to wonder whether we shall survive till night. When we read them the other way we begin to expect to see our great-grandchildren after all. Granted there are black spots as well as white on the checkerboard of life. What a difference it makes in our courage and effectiveness which set of spots we look at day after day!

IV

If you want to build up your courage here is another discipline which you may well undertake. Remind yourself that difficult situations will disclose new powers within you. When demands increase, our ability to meet the demands increases too. That is why we can face an unknown future without fear. Whatever our burdens may be we shall eventually find within ourselves power to carry them. Whatever problems arise we shall gradually acquire the ability to solve them. This is not blind self-assurance. This is the experience of humanity.

Some years ago a vessel was wrecked in the desolate seas south of New Zealand. A few survivors reached a ledge of wind-swept rock where they lived for a few days on shellfish. It was obvious that they must find another food supply and find it speedily. Otherwise they were doomed. A mile or two away they could see a larger island where, according to one of the survivors, the government placed each year a small supply of food for mariners who might be wrecked in those lonely waters. If these men could reach that island they had a chance to keep alive until the government vessel made its next visit. The question was how the intervening stretch of water could be traversed. The chill of the Antarctic currents made the water too cold for swimming, and in any case the distance was too great for most of the men. Yet the entire group saved itself. How? Those men set about the task of catching and killing the large sea birds that approached the reef. They skinned the birds carefully and then sewed the skins together with sinews taken from the birds' own legs. Then they stretched the sheet of skin over a rough framework of roots dug from the ledge, and thus formed a clumsy raft. One day when the sea was smooth and the current favorable they all clambered on the raft

and made the hazardous passage to the distant island. There they found food and shelter, and there they kept themselves alive until the government vessel appeared and rescued them.

Had you described such a situation and such an escape to those sailors as they lived in comfort on shipboard they would have said that no human being could survive such an ordeal. Yet they themselves did. How? Because under the stress of extreme danger and imperative need new resourcefulness and new energy emerged within them. During those awful days on the ledge they learned a truth that thousands of other embattled people have learned. Heavy demands without call forth new resources within. What we must do we usually find we can do—somehow.

All of us will do well to recall this principle as we face the lesser crises of our more sheltered life. When a combination of circumstances compels us to do two men's work, or crowds upon us a dozen heavy responsibilities, we have nothing to fear. The very strain of the situation swings our reserve powers into action. When decisions must be made and made quickly, the mind automatically quickens its pace. When tragedies befall us, unwonted strength and

poise emerge within our hearts. We find we can meet the tragic situation with a smile, and then quietly reconstruct our plans for the future. This is not optimistic imagination. These words have been proved true in a thousand places, all the way from a reef in the Antarctic to homes in the busy cities of North America. If you want more courage for your daily life remind yourself of this truth. Say as you begin each new day, "I may meet hard problems and cruel strains during these next few hours. But I have nothing to fear. When life brings special burdens life calls forth in me special strength to carry them. When hardships approach I shall find extra strength and extra wisdom approaching, too."

We see a sorrow rising in our way,
We strive to flee from the approaching ill,
We seek some small escape, we kneel and pray,
But when the blow falls then our hearts are still.
Not that the pain is of its sharpness shorn—
We find it can be borne.

V

Here is a third suggestion. If you need more courage, gain and keep faith in God's help. Experience has shown repeatedly that the men and women who

have such faith are peculiarly able to meet the crises of life and conquer them. The reason is obvious. If, as you face the day's work, you feel your only resources are your own power and the help of your friends, your confidence and your resultant strength will be sadly limited—particularly if you have found yourself and your friends a disappointment. If, on the other hand, you have the firm conviction that you can rely not only on yourself and your friends but on a living God as well, your inner power and assurance will be immensely enlarged. You have three lines of reinforcement instead of two, and what a difference that third line makes!

This is why a man who is in earnest about increasing his own courage makes a sorry blunder if he neglects the development of his own religious life. He robs himself of a final resource of spiritual power which, in some sudden emergency, would enable him to stand firm rather than collapse in fear and despair. It makes no difference what name a man ascribes to the Unseen Helper, or through what form of worship he lifts his little life to the Greater Life that is above and around us all. But if he keeps alive within his heart that conviction that God is real and that God will sustain the man who does his best, then he gains

for himself a source of courage and endurance which has brought incalculable help to the embattled generations. "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?" Those are the words not only of an ancient poet but also of ten thousand times ten thousand in every century since.

As a matter of fact, does God help us in emergencies? The next time that question troubles you, stop looking for evidences of divine assistance in the external world. Look, instead, for evidences of a change in the inner life of the man who prays. There are, conceivably, two ways by which God can bring us help. He might intervene in the normal course of events and so rearrange affairs in the external world that our problems would be suddenly solved and the burdens lifted miraculously from our tired shoulders. Or, on the other hand, God might quicken our own inner life—restoring our perspective, renewing our self-confidence, reëstablishing the conviction that we are not alone in our efforts to attain the best. Which of these methods does God follow? The evidence of science is more and more strongly against the theory that God interferes miraculously with the sequences of the external world. The evidence of human experi-

ence is more and more strongly in favor of the conviction that God does work within the minds and hearts of men, renewing their inner life and making them able to carry the burdens that were once too much for them.

Sherwood Eddy has given a singularly vivid account of this experience of inner renewal as it came to him. "In 1896 I went to India as a missionary, carrying high hopes and youthful enthusiasm. But within a year I broke down from overwork, and came to the verge of nervous prostration. I was really suffering from spiritual maladjustment. My life was one of constant outward strain, but not one of constant inward renewal. One morning in November, 1897 after a long and sleepless night, I begged God to show me the way out of my trouble. And a verse from the Bible, flashing into my mind, changed the course of my life. 'He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; for the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water, springing up into eternal life.' From that moment I began to draw not on myself but on God. Something happened that morning thirty years ago which has been happening again every day since. I have had literally not a single hour of discouragement or dark-

ness. I may have failed God, but He has never failed me. The Eternal God has been my refuge, and underneath me I have felt the Everlasting Arms." [2] To find and keep a faith like that is to gain an inexhaustible source of power.

VI

Here is one more suggestion. When your battle actually begins remind yourself that you must use to the full your reserves of sheer endurance. Time and again the struggle for courage and consequent achievement resolves itself into a contest between a man's endurance and the attacks of misfortune and disappointment. If his endurance outlasts the blows of disaster, victory will finally come to him. If his endurance proves inadequate his long-continued battle will end in defeat. Centuries ago Paul wrote his friends in Ephesus that they must make use of all the armor that God's grace and their own wisdom could provide. But when he had described all the equipment which they might secure he added significantly, "Having done all, stand!" The ability to stand was the ultimate weapon. Inside the com-

[2] Sherwood Eddy, *Religion and Social Justice*, p. 90.

plete suit of armor there must be an invincible heart.

This principle has held true throughout the centuries. You and I may prepare ourselves in a dozen ingenious ways for the battle of life. We may find new and highly effective methods for developing our own courage. But when the fighting actually begins we must pit our endurance against the blows that fall on us from every side. The extent of our endurance will invariably be the measure of our victory. When all is said, Beethoven had to force himself to keep on writing music. Kavanagh had to make himself climb on his horse after he had fallen off. You and I must thrust ourselves back into the struggle and literally refuse to surrender. This is the ultimate strategy of embattled human beings, and what glorious reserves of will power and endurance it eventually discloses! The martyrs of Ephesus and Rome did stand, and they found they could die unafraid. Beethoven found he could write music even if his hearing did fail. Kavanagh learned that he was master of his own destiny, even though no one believed such a triumph possible. You and I do not come from a race that falters when the fighting grows heavy. We spring

from a stock that has fought and won a million battles, and has in the process built up a dauntless heart and an iron will. Remember this the next time you face a hard struggle. Call in your reserves of endurance. Never consider surrender. No situation in life can master you until you yourself pull down your flag.

Several years ago one of the settlement houses in New York planned to give free music lessons to any children in the neighborhood who showed genuine interest. A ten-year-old urchin appeared and begged for lessons on the violin. The teacher was not certain how serious the boy was, and suggested that he pay twenty-five cents for each of his first four lessons. After that everything would be free. The boy explained with some confusion that he did not have any money, but added confidently that he knew how he could earn some. A month later he appeared again, this time with a dollar bill rolled tight in his hand. "Here's the dollar," he said, "Now lemme start." The teacher was suspicious and asked the boy where he had earned the money. There was an embarrassed silence, and then the little fellow told his story. "Down where I lives there's some kids ain't got no place to sleep. There's a kid near me who ain't got

no bed at all. I been rentin' him my bed fer a quarter a week, an' I been sleepin' this month on th' floor. There's yer dollar. Won't yer gimme the lessons on th' violin?" The endurance of a little child. You and I must do as well.

CHAPTER XI

INCREASING ONE'S CHANCES OF ACHIEVEMENT

I

One of the notable developments in modern American life is the unprecedented growth of high schools, colleges, and universities. There was a time when higher education was the prerogative of a favored few. Now it is within the reach of almost any boy or girl who really wants it. Consider the implications of a statement like this, recently made by one of our educational leaders. "Recently 210 of our colleges and universities made a report of their present enrollment and their recent rate of growth. In 1914 these institutions enrolled 187,000 students. In 1920 the number had grown to 294,000. If this rate of increase continues in the years ahead, these institutions will have 659,000 students in 1930 and 1,138,000 in 1950." [1]

The full significance of this situation appears when we compare the growth of the population as a whole

[1] Report of the Institute for Public Service, 1921.

with the growth of the student group. In the last thirty-five years our population has grown 78 per cent. But our college enrollment has grown 445 per cent, and the enrollment in our secondary schools 951 per cent. Why are so many young people trying to get a thorough education? Why are so many parents struggling to send their children through high school and then on to college? Because, as American life is organized to-day, higher education is an enormous asset in any career and an essential preparation for most. One of the surest ways by which to increase a child's chances of achievement is to give him a long and thorough schooling. Someone with an eye for statistics has recently taken the biographical sketches in *Who's Who in America* and worked out this interesting prophecy. "If a boy stops his education during grammar school the odds against his achieving eminence in later life are 160,000 to 1. If the same boy finishes grammar school the odds drop to only 40,000 to 1. If he completes a high school course the odds are only 1600 to 1. If he gets a college education or better the odds are only 173 to 1." [2]

But when we turn from general statistics to the

[2] Reported from the University of Wisconsin.

record of individual instances a curious fact emerges. Thousands of young people who have had the finest educational advantages become in middle life a sorry disappointment. Their long and elaborate training does not eventuate in a successful career. Meantime other young people, boys and girls who had far fewer initial advantages, push ahead and gain the positions of eminence. In our American Hall of Fame there were in 1927 sixty-five individuals. By common consent these were the fifty-eight men and the seven women who had done most for the United States. How many of these people had had in youth an elaborate formal education? Thirty-four of the fifty-eight men had practically no formal education whatever. Among those whose schooling would now be regarded as defective were Washington, Lincoln, Franklin, Webster, Agassiz, Peter Cooper, and Robert Fulton. Granted that conditions have now changed, and that the young man who in the eighteenth century could win success without elaborate schooling would find it hard to do so to-day. Granted that figures like these can easily be misinterpreted, or even used to prove a dangerous thesis. As we study records of this type and scores of other records like them, one fact becomes increasingly clear. A fine

education is only one factor in a successful career. Quite obviously other factors are operating. Sir Walter Scott once made a remark which might well be quoted in this connection. "Fine china will not improve the flavor of indifferent tea."

II

What is this second element in a successful career? Some years ago the Carnegie Foundation published this significant statement. "An inquiry was recently sent to a group of successful engineers. They were asked this question. 'In determining probable success or failure in your profession what factors do you count most important?' About 1500 replies were received. To everyone's surprise the factor of technical training was voted relatively unimportant. The factor of character received seven times as many votes. In the effort to analyze this situation more fully a second inquiry was sent to some 30,000 members of the four major Engineering Societies. Six groups of qualities were listed—character, judgment, efficiency, understanding of men, knowledge of life, and technical skill. Which counted most in sizing up young men for employment or promotion? Some 7000 engineers replied. 94 per cent of them put character at the top

of the list. By an equally decisive majority technical skill was put at the bottom." [8]

Parents and teachers as well as young people would do well to ponder such a statement deeply. We are now giving to an immense number of young people a technical training and a formal education unprecedented in history. But all the evidence goes to show that this superb education will not, of itself, guarantee fine achievement. If our boys and girls hope to make a satisfying record in life they must have, in addition to their diplomas and degrees, those familiar but priceless qualities of mind and spirit summed up in the great word "character." Without those qualities these young people are doomed to mediocrity or worse. An educated weakling is a disappointment. An educated rascal is a menace.

It is at this point that many people reveal an unfortunate defect. They may show the ability to graduate from school and college, but when they meet the stern demand for self-analysis, self-mastery, and persistent self-culture they fail pitifully. Face to face with the grim task of character-building they postpone, evade, or seek refuge in any one of a

[8] From Bulletin 11 of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1918).

dozen familiar self-justifications. Dr. Fosdick writes out of long pastoral experience, "The willingness of a man to come to grips with himself is one of the most searching tests of his character. The average man is ready to tackle anything else under heaven—all the way from spiritualism to international affairs. But he stubbornly refuses to face the responsibility for managing intelligently and effectively his own life." How many people there are to whom those keen sentences apply! These men and women can describe at length the shortcomings of others, but they seem blissfully ignorant of and indifferent to their own. These boys and girls can solve the problems of higher mathematics and literary criticism, but before the problem of their own bad habits and faulty mental attitudes they stand helpless. If such individuals hope to increase their chances of achievement they must deliberately and resolutely address themselves to the task of building into their lives those qualities of character which, when all is said, are the very foundations of fine attainment.

Suppose a man is willing to undertake this self-discipline. Suppose he is ready to supplement his record of formal education with an equally impressive record of character-development. What are the

traits he should seek to acquire if he hopes to win success in a business or professional career to-day?

III

One trait which will greatly increase a man's chances of success is the ability to watch and perfect the details of his work. In an Italian manuscript dating from the sixteenth century we find a treatise on painting which was written by an old master named Cennini. He begins by telling his pupils frankly that they must spend some six years mastering the preliminary details of their work. Some of his statements now seem quaint and amusing. In his chapter entitled "How to Make Flour Paste" we find these words. "Beginning to paint pictures in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, and always invoking that name as well as the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we must first prepare a foundation for our picture with various kinds of glue." Then follow seven chapters of minute directions about the manufacture of different adhesives. We smile at that mediæval attention to detail, and yet if we study carefully the record of the leaders in any line of work to-day we find underlying their achievement this same capacity for taking pains. Tennyson spent

seventeen years polishing the stanzas of "In Memoriam," and rewrote the apparently spontaneous lyric "Birds in the High Hall Garden" no less than thirty times. Where did the time and effort go? Into the task of perfecting details. When Paderewski began to plan for his first American tour he spent from thirteen to eighteen hours a day at his piano. Why so much effort? In order that each phrase and each tone should be as perfect as he could make it. Or consider the work that Peter Tschaikowsky put into the orchestration of his great symphony, the "Pathetique." In 1893, when he was struggling to complete the score, he wrote his brother, "I am up to my eyes in work on this new symphony. The further I go the more difficult the orchestration becomes. I have been working all day over two pages, but still they will not come out as I wish." Three undisputed masters—and what quality of character did they have in common? The ability to watch and perfect details.

Suppose we confess frankly that the spirit of the modern age is hostile to this ideal of fine workmanship. The ideal of mass production and swift profit has, in many circles at least, entirely supplanted the older ideal of doing a few things and doing each supremely well. The new attitude was deliciously

stated in a satirical verse which recently appeared under the title "To Thomas Gray, Author of the Elegy in a Country Churchyard."

They say you took seven years to write one poem
Laboring over every line as a telescope-maker
Works over a crystal.
Well, what good did it do you?
Cut off from your fellows,
Your thoughts interned in your graveyard,
You finally became so much a part of your poem
That children of to-day keep asking
"Who wrote Gray's Elegy?"
Why polish a phrase?
Why search for a rhyme?
If you had only been a free verse poet
You could have written and sold enough poems
To buy the church and the churchyard too.
Poor Thomas Gray! *

But if a man is in earnest about achievement he must resolutely turn his back on such flimsy ideas and ideals. It makes no difference what type of work he is doing or in what community he lives. Unless he gains by patient self-discipline the capacity to appreciate fine workmanship and the ability to perfect details, he is certain to be outstripped sooner or later

* W. K. Jones.

by some rival who has learned to take pains. Time and again the difference between the man who wins a race and the man who comes in second is not a mile or even a yard, but a single inch. Time and again the difference between the man who achieves eminence and the man who misses it lies in a certain fineness of workmanship which the general public may overlook but which experts detect, and which determines their acceptance of one man and their rejection of the other.

IV

A second trait of character which often proves crucial is the ability to sacrifice the present for the future. Some people have this ability and because of it gradually forge their way ahead. In any situation they are able to work and save for to-morrow rather than seize and enjoy the immediate advantage of to-day. The result is that when their to-morrow finally arrives it is far better than their rival's unplanned and unperfected one.

In 1914 a travelling salesman entered one of the banks in western Massachusetts and opened a small savings account. His first deposit was only ten dollars, but he explained to the teller that on each of his trips through that city he intended to put at

least a small sum in the bank. The teller had heard such promises many times before and merely mumbled an acknowledgment. But this depositor surprised him. Every ten days this salesman's route brought him through that city, and on every visit he made a deposit in that bank. The amounts were invariably small—usually five dollars or ten dollars—but there were no breaks in the schedule. Of course this salesman could easily have found more agreeable ways to use that money. It represented his margin of income, the few dollars he earned each week which he did not have to spend immediately for necessities. That sum might have gone into a single weekly extravagance which would undoubtedly have made the hard days and nights a little more tolerable. But week after week the savings bank balance grew—and what finally happened? In the confused days after the War this young man had an unexpected opportunity to buy a promising retail business at a ridiculously low figure. Immediately he gathered all his cash reserves, and then applied to the president of this bank for a loan. He could offer little collateral and few references except his bank-book, with its record of years of steady saving. The loan was finally given, and the business purchased. A few months later this

young man, who had started at the bottom in 1914, had a fine store which was fully paid for, credit at any number of banks, and in the bank at which he had made so many small deposits a cash reserve of fourteen thousand dollars. What was the trait of character which was responsible for his achievement? We call it thrift. But what is thrift? It is nothing more nor less than the ability to sacrifice the present for the future. The money that might be spent—and very pleasantly spent—to-day is deliberately saved to build up a better and more rewarding to-morrow.

We find this same trait in most of the men who achieve eminence in art, literature, and the professions. Repeatedly these men display a surprising ability to "scorn delights and live laborious days" for the sake of the finer music, the finer books, and the finer professional technique of to-morrow. It is this ability, leading in the end to peculiarly effective accomplishment, which is responsible for much of their success. In 1886 Mark Twain and his wife were living a poverty-stricken life in Paris. Two of his books had been published, and attractive offers were being made for his next manuscript. He had several half-finished sketches on hand, and one day an American publisher cabled him an offer of sixteen

thousand dollars if he would sell them immediately. The difficulty was that the manuscripts were not yet in final form. Mark Twain knew he could improve them immensely if he spent a few more weeks on them. Which course should he follow? Should he sell the sketches at once, take the money, and begin to live in comfort—or should he keep the manuscripts, make them his best, and endure poverty a little longer? He talked the matter over with his wife, and then sent word to the publisher that he had at the moment nothing fully ready for publication. Then, fearing lest his courage should weaken, he did an unusual thing. He tore the tempting manuscripts to bits and burned them in his open fire. Now there would be no question of surrender! The work that bore his name would be his best, even if he and his wife would have to endure hardship many weeks longer. What name do we give to this quality of character? We might call it resolution, or loyalty to an ideal, or a love of fine craftsmanship. Or we might give it the name we suggested a moment ago. It was the ability to sacrifice the present for the future.

Gaining this ability is a hard but a thoroughly possible task. It calls for incessant self-discipline, innumerable battles with one's self on the obscure

and uninspiring battlefields of daily life. A man who has never practiced relentless self-control in little things will never be able to give an impressive exhibition of self-control in such a crisis as the one that came to Mark Twain. A man who has never learned to say "No!" to the advertisements, to the insistent salesmen, and to his own desire for comfort and luxury will never be able to build up through years of thrift the cash reserve which may suddenly spell the difference between business success and business failure. It is above small and unseen foundation stones like these that the fine structure of a self-controlled and self-directed character is finally built. And when that structure is completed success in one's career—whatever that career happens to be—is usually surprisingly near.

v

A third trait of character which increases greatly a man's chances of achievement is the ability to work without those helps which the ordinary man seems to require. What are those helps? The ordinary man has to have success if he is to do his best. When orders pour in and profits multiply the average salesman can make an impressive showing in courage and

efficiency. When publishers clamor for manuscripts the average writer has no difficulty in maintaining both his morale and his output. The ordinary man also needs sympathy and commendation if he is to attain his maximum of power. It is strange to discover how many people can do their best only when they are buoyed up and pushed along by the praise of those about them. Some years ago one of the most prominent preachers in New England confessed frankly that this was his situation. "I have to have constant expressions of approval," he said, "if I am to do my best. Unless people tell me frequently how well I am doing and how much my sermons help them I find it is almost impossible to work effectively. The praise of other people is, I must confess, the very breath of my life."

Many wives and husbands have learned the truth of these statements from long experience in their own home. Repeatedly all of us meet individuals who must have the constant assistance of the other members of their family if they are to carry on day after day. Left to themselves these men and women soon become discouraged, timorous, and uncertain. Only when those with whom they live assure them of their remarkable achievements and praise their

efforts extravagantly can they muster power for the next day's—or the next hour's—work. There is a great amount of truth in a semi-humorous paragraph that appeared recently in one of our weeklies. "Someone has wisely said that the average woman goes through life with a dependent baby on one arm and a dependent husband on the other. On the day of her marriage the young bride assumes responsibility for her husband's physical well-being, and also for other and far more difficult forms of nurture. Every woman gradually learns the art of psychological nursing, the trick of keeping her husband's courage from giving way in the face of the strain of business or professional life. A friend of mine recently confessed, 'Taking care of my husband's egotism, keeping him in such mental and spiritual shape that he is happy and efficient, is a bigger job than caring for all my three children combined.' "

But occasionally we meet individuals who can do their best without these familiar stimuli. Success? Repeatedly they demonstrate to the world that they are quite as effective when things are going wrong as when things are going right. As a matter of fact they may reach their highest levels of courage and resolution when they are being roundly beaten.

Emerson speaks of men "who rise refreshed when they hear a threat." If a man builds into his life that capacity for vigorous and sustained counter-attack he increases enormously his chances of achievement. Others do their best only when they are winning. He does well when he is winning, and even better when he is losing. Hard to compete with such a rival! And the stimulus of praise? Some men and women learn to live and work without it. If other people commend them, all right. If other people ignore them, all right. If other people criticize them savagely, all right. No matter what happens these men and women hold their course and maintain their momentum, like steamships pushing steadily forward against wind and tide. Who can question the superior power of such personalities? Who does not realize that they give special promise of achievement?

Two generations ago a young man who hoped to be a writer was literally starving in a garret in Paris. On the roof just outside his window he placed a clumsy bird-trap of his own manufacture. Occasionally a sparrow would be caught there, and then this young man would hastily kill the bird, pluck off its feathers, and grill it over a tiny charcoal fire.

That sparrow and a cent's worth of bread made his meal. For no less than six months this grim struggle against poverty and failure continued. The sparrows in that neighborhood became wary of the trap on the roof, and the captures averaged only two a day. Yet Emile Zola kept on with his work, writing new stories and articles as fast as the old ones were rejected. There was not a thing in his cold and hungry world that gave him encouragement, and yet—lacking completely those stimuli on which the rest of us are so dependent—he drove himself to continue the struggle. Granted that his ultimate achievement was due to innate literary skill. It was the ability to work without the encouragement of praise and success which finally gave that literary skill a chance to reveal itself. Had Zola lacked the fighting spirit, the determination never to surrender, his ability would have perished with him after the first month of hunger in that garret.

VI

There is one other quality which increases immensely a man's chances of success. It is the capacity for sustained growth. Some months ago the headmaster of a prominent New England school sent me

this description of one of his recent graduates. I had written asking for an estimate of the boy's capacities and probable achievements, and the reply to my letter contained these significant sentences. "I hope of course that this boy will make good. But as I think about him and study his record I am not sure that he has the capacity for sustained growth. His ambitions and enthusiasms are above the average, and perhaps the final account half a century hence will show a balance on the right side of the ledger. But the question I have about that boy is this. How soon will he reach the limit of his development and stop growing?"

Suppose that boy, with this limited capacity for growth, enters a business career. What will happen? In all probability he will make an excellent initial impression. His youth, his ambition, his evident enthusiasm and charm will predispose people in his favor. But after a few years curious difficulties will arise. If he is promoted to a more important and more exacting position the new job will prove too much for him. If he is asked to solve problems of the next range of difficulty he will face them in confusion and uncertainty. If the heavy burdens of a chief executive were dropped on his shoulders he

would suddenly flatten out like a wall crushed by a too heavy roof. Thus this young man will be quietly but relentlessly held in a subordinate position all his days. The men who know him well will realize that he is a "little" person with no chances of ever growing bigger. Despite his pleas for advancement his employers will persistently leave him where he is, realizing full well that he could not fill a larger position even if it were entrusted to him. One of the most searching questions any man can ask himself is this. "Have I stopped growing? Am I keeping alive my capacity for further development? My job is continually changing and expanding, offering new opportunities and bringing new demands. Do I grow with the job, or each year do I drop a little further behind?"

Some people feel that it is impossible to gain the capacity for sustained growth. They tell us that certain individuals were born with the power to keep growing, while others were saddled at birth with a set of abilities capable of only meager expansion. Thus the attainment of each man was predetermined by his inheritance, and when—sometime in the later years—we find our mental and spiritual development stops, there is nothing to do but accept the unfor-

tunate situation with the best grace we can muster. Our physical growth stopped during the twenties. The development of our character and our ability eventually stops too.

Suppose we confess there is a large amount of truth in this familiar and highly discouraging theory. Yet when all is said, experience shows that resolute men and women have at least some control over the extent of their own growth. Our physical mechanism seems capable of almost indefinite modification and improvement. Thousands of men have found, as Theodore Roosevelt found, that the inheritance-factors making for a puny physique can be counteracted, and that a robust body and nerves of steel can be acquired. Similar developments are possible in the realm of the mind and the spirit. Suppose you deliberately forced yourself to read books that would make you think, and think hard. Suppose you welcomed criticism and honestly tried to profit by it. Suppose you determined to learn the new methods and the new facts recently discovered by other men in your business or profession. Suppose you resolved to keep yourself exposed to stimulating and inspiring influences rather than deadening ones. Do you know what would happen? You would, like thou-

sands of people before you, begin to grow again. A year hence you would be appreciably better, wiser, and more effective than you are to-day. We can prolong our youth further than we dream. We can keep growing through middle life and down to the very end of the road.

Let me grow lovely, growing old,
So many fine things do—
Laces and ivory and gold,
And silks need not be new.

There is healing in old trees,
Old streets a glamor hold,
Why may not I as well as these
Grow lovely, growing old? [5]

[5] Karle W. Baker.

CHAPTER XII

STAYING YOUNG AS ONE GROWS OLD

I

CAN it be done? Obviously we cannot stay young in body. In spite of all our efforts gray hairs make their embarrassing appearance, and the trim lines of youth give place to the unmistakable curves of middle age. A careful diet, frequent visits to a gymnasium, and the assistance of a clever tailor may hide some of our years, but eventually the fact that we are fifty rather than twenty advertises itself in a dozen unhappy ways. Our bodies grow old, and no way has been found by which the process can be permanently arrested.

Similarly we grow old in our interests. The man who at thirty was the social lion of the city finds at fifty that an evening paper and an easy chair are more alluring than the best dance music in the country. The woman who once adored horseback riding now settles comfortably among the cushions of her limousine. Why do young people enjoy violent ex-

ercises, anyway? Occasionally in middle life we rouse ourselves to impressive exhibitions of youthfulness merely to show the children that "we can if we want to." But at best the performance is forced. Everyone knows we are playing a part.

Most curious of all, our habits solidify as we leave the teens and twenties behind. As children we disclosed an extraordinary unpredictability. We revealed one set of traits and interests one day, and a different set the next. We had one life-ambition at sixteen and another at seventeen. This element of unpredictability in both our conduct and our desires kept our parents wondering whether on the next state occasion we would reveal our angelic or our demonic side. But by the time we reached the late twenties and the early thirties that situation changed. Our habit-patterns became fixed, our personality assumed a definite and a familiar contour, and our friends could foretell accurately our actions and even our opinions. We began to grow old, in our habits as well as in our interests and our physique. Here are basic developments of human life, developments which we can modify but which we can never wholly arrest.

Is this process of growing old anything to dread?

Certainly not! For numberless people the second half of life has proved far happier and more rewarding than the first. We usually picture middle life and old age as periods of waning power and fading charm. Sometimes they are. Yet in an immense number of instances the years after fifty prove the most satisfying in life. Think, for example, of the men who "find themselves" during this later period. They may lack some of the physical vigor which they had in youth, but they reveal in its place a new ability to judge people and situations, and a new power to get things done. Everything considered, these men are far more effective at sixty than they were at thirty.

Or think of the women who become more rather than less attractive as they approach middle life. The awkwardness and self-consciousness of the teens vanish. The mannerisms of the early twenties entirely disappear. The discipline of the years brings a new charm and a new sympathy, and these women possess at fifty an attractiveness they never had thirty years before. You are afraid of growing old? You think that the first years of life are the best, and that after twenty-one everything slips into a sorry state of accelerating decline? Nothing of the kind! In

every community we find men and women who are more delightful companions in later life than they were in youth, and who are far more effective at sixty than they were at thirty-five.

> The old, old elm has put on clouds of lace
> Delicate as a bride's. A dawn-like grace
> Covers her million dark-twigged memories,
> A dryad gaiety is in her face,
> And light as lilac-spray against the skies
> New wonder is upborne by ancient stress.
> I marvel at a mortal thing so wise—
> To weave herself enchantment for a dress,
> And heal the wounds of Time with loveliness! [1]

How many elderly people have learned that magic! How many men and women have found ways to "heal the wounds of Time with loveliness"!

II

If there are these parts of life in which we grow old, are there other parts in which we can stay young? Are there any realms in which a genuine youthfulness may persist throughout the years? One day when John Quincy Adams was eighty years of age a friend met him on the streets of Boston. "How is

[1] Karle W. Baker.

John Quincy Adams?" this friend asked gaily. The old man's eyes began to twinkle, and then he spoke slowly. His words have become classic. "John Quincy Adams himself is very well, thank you. But the house he lives in is sadly delapidated. It is tottering on its foundations. The walls are badly shattered, and the roof is worn. The building trembles with every wind, and I think John Quincy Adams will have to move out of it before long. But he himself is very well." And with a wave of the hand the old man walked on. Was he old or young? Old in body but astonishingly young in spirit. That was his victory over the years, a victory which was only partial but was still indubitably real. He had learned to stay young as he grew old.

Thousands of elderly people in our own time are winning this same victory. They are obviously old in body, in interests, and in habits. Yet they are perennially young in their attitude toward life and people, in their cheerfulness, their courage and their hope. Some years ago I quoted the words of John Quincy Adams in a sermon which went out over the radio. The following week I received this altogether charming acknowledgment from an elderly lady who was listening. "This is an old lady who is writing

you. Or at least the house I live in is eighty-two years old. Considering its age the house is in fairly good repair, though I don't think it looks quite as well as it did fifty years ago. I have neglected to keep it painted, as so many women of this generation do. To tell the truth, I have been spending my time on interior decorating. The windows I look out of are fairly clear, and I am glad to tell you I have a reliable tenant in the upper story." Old or young? It would be hard to say.

III

What, now, are the essential qualities of a youthful spirit? As you study the elderly men and women who have succeeded in staying young, what are the striking traits in their personality? Certainly one is the ability to overlook petty annoyances. Most young people have this power, though frankly they deserve little credit for it. It is the by-product of their physical strength, their resilience of nerve, and their limitless hope for the future. These young people can hear themselves criticized and watch themselves defeated without serious irritation of spirit. They feel secretly able to meet life's demands, and they have the unshakable conviction that they will have

many future chances and that they will do better each next time. But in later years this courage and confidence often vanish. One of the first and surest symptoms of spiritual old age is an increasing sensitiveness, irritability, and fear. The classic description of old age given by the *Book of Ecclesiastes* says that the elderly individual finds "the grasshopper a burden." How true that statement is! For many elderly people annoyances as tiny as grasshoppers seem major calamities. Why do the grandchildren make so much noise about the house? Why do they throw their coats on the floor instead of hanging them neatly in the closet, as the children of the past invariably did? Why is the doctor late in making his call, and why does the trained nurse hand us the paper upside down? Young people are usually oblivious to these grasshopper-like annoyances. For many old people they are a curiously heavy burden. When—now and then—we meet a person in the seventies or eighties who is spiritually undisturbed by these little irritations we see a person who has solved one of life's most baffling problems. We see a person who has learned to stay young as he grows old.

A second trait we note in young people—whatever

the number of their birthdays—is an eagerness for new knowledge and new experiences. Here, again, it is natural for boys and girls to possess this quality. It is an inevitable concomitant of their youth. This explains why youngsters read anything they can lay their hands on, why they are only too ready to fly in the nearest airplane, and why on certain occasions they deliberately disobey the parental commands and violate the parental codes. These acts are expressions of their thirst for new knowledge and new experiences. These things are evidences of that priceless spiritual quality which keeps humanity perennially young, even while the generations constantly grow old. Without this spirit adventuresomeness and achievement would have vanished long since from the earth.

But by the time an individual reaches the thirties and forties this spirit usually fades. Radicalism cools into conservatism, and the airplane that once seemed such a challenge and such a delight now seems only a contraption designed to break the heads of reckless people. By the time the individual reaches the seventies or eighties he has—in most cases—gained a positive dread of new ideas and new experiences. There is no question that most elderly people have "fixa-

tions" of one kind or another. These fixations range all the way from that of the elderly preacher who cannot bear to hear his theology questioned, to that of his wife who cannot permit her daughter-in-law to rearrange the decorations on the mantelpiece. When, in rare instances, we meet an elderly person who is still eager to hear new truth and enjoy new experiences we see an individual with an extraordinary quality of spirit. Here is a person who, either by some fortunate trick of inheritance or some splendor of self-discipline, has gained the power to remain perennially young.

One summer as I was travelling in the heart of New Zealand I met such a woman. She was well over eighty, and yet she was an indefatigable traveller. Her daughter told us that the preceding summer she had journeyed through Europe, and that she had met there a man who said that the most interesting geysers and hot springs in the world were in the interior of New Zealand. So the next spring she insisted on leaving California and starting across the Pacific. Her daughter of sixty (a far more elderly person than her mother!) followed reluctantly in her wake. Exploring the geyser region in New Zealand meant taking long automobile rides on roads that were none too smooth, and spending uncomfortable nights in hotels that followed the English practice of keep-

ing the guests in cold storage. But that traveller of eighty was undisturbed. As a matter of fact, she seemed to enjoy the adventures quite as much as those of us who were only half her age. On the day we were to visit the Valley of the Geysers in Weirakei, she appeared for breakfast swathed in shawls. The dining room of the little hotel was so cold that we could see our breath clearly even though we clustered about the microscopic open fire. But the senior member of the party chatted gaily. "Last night," she said, "I found tin sheets on my bed. But perhaps a hot spring will thaw me out." Who could question her love of life, her hunger for new knowledge and new experience?

There is still another quality that is clearly evident in the men and women who succeed in staying young. It is an abiding confidence in life and people, particularly young people. This spirit is, of course, one of the familiar traits of boys and girls. They are sure that our world is a glorious place, and that their contemporaries are very extraordinary people. Some day these schoolmates will astonish all mankind by their achievement. Here is the gay confidence that makes a school or college graduation such a brave and happy occasion. Here is the quality of mind and spirit that makes two young people ready to

attempt the tremendous venture of marriage and parenthood. The future promises nothing but joy. There never has been such a home as the one they two are going to build together. Financial difficulties? But lots of people (young people, too) have assured them that two can live quite as cheaply as one!

How long does this spirit last? By middle life it has given way, usually by imperceptible stages, to an obvious cynicism. By the time old age comes we find the individual who once had such glorious confidence in the future looking ahead with blank dismay, and advising all the youngsters in the vicinity to turn back to the "good old days." Someone has recently pictured this contrast between the outlook of youth and old age in an amusing jingle. A boy says:

My grandpa notes the world's worn cogs
And says we're going to the dogs.
His grandpa in a hut of logs
Swore things were going to the dogs.
His grandpa in the Irish bogs
Vowed things were going to the dogs.
His grandpa, dressed in cave-man's togs,
Moaned, "Things are going to the dogs!"
Now this is all I have to state:
The dogs have had an awful wait!

Yet occasionally we meet people in the seventies or eighties who have withstood this thrust toward despair. What an inspiration such well-seasoned optimists are! After spending a full half-century in business they sincerely admire the younger men who have inherited the concern, and they willingly admit that the new methods of working are a vast improvement over the old. After listening for years to an elderly preacher they still attend church after a young man has been called to the pulpit, they make an honest effort to understand the new point of view, and then they confess frankly that the new minister's preaching is quite as helpful as that of his white-haired predecessor. After bringing up their own children in their own way, and then watching their children bring up their children in their own way, they are now ready to give the third generation a fair chance and the benefit of the doubt, and let this third generation devise its own methods of child-training. Here are elderly people who have kept their youthful confidence in life and human beings. Here are men and women for whom the light never fades, and the music never sinks low. These are individuals who have won a splendid victory over Time. They may be old in body, but their spirit is perennially young.

IV

Suppose, as the years pass, you and I want to win this victory. Suppose we are ready to make a serious and a sustained effort to retain a youthful spirit and a youthful outlook on life. What are the immediate steps we can take toward that goal?

To begin with, let us accept cheerfully the new situations and the new limitations which the years inevitably put upon us. That is, let us consent to grow old. The men and women who refuse to accept middle life and old age, who insist on trying to act at seventy as though they were only seventeen, are the very people who fail to stay young. Everyone in the vicinity realizes they are playing a part and playing it poorly, and as a result everyone becomes acutely conscious of their true age. One of the wisest physicians of our days writes, "One of the secrets of perpetual youth is the willingness to grow old naturally and gracefully. A man of forty keeps himself fresh and vigorous by surrendering his athletic championships and turning his attention to the development of his mind and character. A woman of fifty stays young if, when her children have grown up and left home, she advances to the next stage in her development

and lets her interests broaden out and include the community. The business and professional men of sixty need never be 'on the shelf' if they leave the more active part of life to younger men, and seek to make their contribution to the community through their maturer wisdom and experience. Meantime, unfortunately, the individuals who seek to demonstrate to the world that they are still 'one of the boys' or 'one of the girls' succeed only in making themselves ridiculous. The fact is there are fresh instincts, opportunities and interests ready to spring into being at each new phase of our development. By welcoming them in turn we stay young. By advancing with the years we attain perpetual youth." [1]

Another suggestion, equally simple and practical, is this. If we want to keep a youthful spirit all the way through life let us busy ourselves with tasks that force us to think of other people and their needs. As the years pass and physical limitations become more apparent we all tend to become self-centered. If the process is not checked we find ourselves at sixty or seventy living in a world scarcely bigger than the one bounded by our own house, our own relatives, and our own increasingly acute aches and pains. It

[1] See J. A. Hadfield, *Psychology and Morals*, p. 156f.

is inevitable that people who are thus more and more immersed in their own little affairs should seem old to others and feel old to themselves. As a matter of fact they are old. They have lost that spirit which is peculiarly characteristic of youth—an interest in all sorts of people and all sorts of experiences. How, as we find ourselves growing self-centered, can we break the spell of advancing years and a shriveling world? Only by deliberately forcing ourselves into larger undertakings, busying ourselves with thoughts and ventures which make the habit of self-reference and self-absorption literally impossible.

In Dr. Grenfell's autobiography you will find this illustration of the problem and the way by which it can be solved. "In the early days of our mission among the Labrador fishermen someone in England organized the Fisher Lads' Letter Writing Association. Each member took the names of so many orphan British boys at sea, and agreed to write them regularly. Sometimes these letters did more for those who wrote them than they did for those who received them. I remember in particular one elderly lady whose sole concern for years had been her own feelings and the state of her own health. She had enjoyed semi-invalidism for so long that it seemed un-

likely she would ever be a thoroughly normal person again. Through the constant use of refined stimulants she succeeded in postponing that final illness which would have been a merciful relief to her long-suffering family. Joining our Letter Writing Association did wonders for this woman. The doctors were forgotten, the stimulants tabooed, and one by one all the insignia of invalidism were banished. Best of all, this woman began to be an asset rather than a liability in her own home. One day I saw her at a British fishing port, surrounded by a bevy of blue-jerseyed lads just off shipboard. They were some of the sailors to whom she had been writing. In thinking about them and working for them she had literally saved herself." [8] How many people could bring back their vanished youth and their vanished joy in life if they would only forget themselves and begin to live for others in some such generous fashion! Now, as nineteen centuries ago, Jesus' great principle rings true—"He that saveth his life shall lose it: he that loseth his life for my sake and the gospel's shall find it."

Here is a final suggestion. As you try to keep your own spirit young, remember that God's help is a

[8] W. T. Grenfell, *A Labrador Doctor*, p. 97.

reality and that it comes to us all, whatever our personal problem happens to be. Those of us who live sheltered lives and are surrounded by the comforts and advantages which wealth and education provide tend to think that God's help is something which comes in dramatic fashion, and comes to those who have been the victims of coarser sins and more spectacular temptations. We forget that God's help comes to us just as truly as it comes to a man in the gutter. How does the help come? Not in any change of our external situation, any miraculous lifting of our burden, any elimination of our problem. Rather the help comes through a change in our own inner life, a restoring of our own soul. We begin to understand our problem and see how it can be solved. We begin to lose the fear of our burden and gain confidence in our ability to carry it. Then, slowly or suddenly, the determination to try again wakens within us, and we find ourselves returning to the battle with high hopes of victory. This is God's help, and it comes repeatedly to us all. It is a reality to thousands of people who have been at grips with sins of the flesh, but who through God's strength and power have finally mastered the vice that was about to master them. It is equally a reality to thousands of

other people who have been beset by sins of the spirit, but who through the new resolution wakened within have gone out to turn a threatened defeat into splendid victory. You and I do not face the problems of daily life alone. There is here with us, as Paul learned centuries ago, "One who is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh *in us*." Our new insight into life's problems is partly our discovery and partly God's gift. Our new determination to win life's battle springs partly from our own courage and partly from God's eagerness to help.

The long day wanes, the slow moon climbs, the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world!
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows, for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset and the baths
Of all the western stars until I die.
Though much is taken much abides, and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are we are:
One equal temper of heroic hearts
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find—and not to yield! [4]

[4] Alfred Tennyson, *Ulysses*.

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